



तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

SANTINIKETAN
VISWA BHARATI
LIBRARY

862 (T) B 43

2nd Sr.

PLAYS

BY

JACINTO PENAVENTE

PLAYS BY
JACINTO BENAVENTE

PLAYS, FIRST SERIES:

*His Widow's Husband, La Malquerida, The
Evil Doers of Good, The Bonds of Interest*

PLAYS, SECOND SERIES:

*No Smoking, Princess Bébé, Autumnal
Roses, The Governor's Wife*

PLAYS, THIRD SERIES:

*The Prince Who Learned Everything Out of
Books, Saturday Night, In the Clouds, The
Truth*

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS



After a drawing by Arturo Ballester

JACINTO BENAVENTE AS DON JUAN TENORIO

PLAYS
BY
JACINTO BENAVENTE

SECOND SERIES

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH
WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY
JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SOCIEDAD DE AUTORES ESPAÑOLES IN THE UNITED
STATES AND CANADA

AUTHORIZED EDITION

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK · LONDON

1923

**COPYRIGHT, 1918, 1919 BY
JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL**

Printed in the United States of America

Published October, 1919



CONTENTS

	PAGE
BENAVENTIANA	vii
NO SMOKING	1
PRINCESS BEBÉ	13
THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE	121
AUTUMNAL ROSES	219

BENAVENTIANA

A writer so subtle and various as Benavente must of necessity have conducted experiments in technique. Talent of the first rank moulds its own instruments of expression, or adapts those which exist to new purposes. It will be interesting to consider this aspect of the Benaventian theatre in the light of its history, and to anticipate, perhaps, the conclusions of the reader.

When Spanish criticism appraised the youthful Benavente as pre-eminently a satirist, it was unquestionably correct in its judgment. Although much of his early work had been serious, and the complexion of his thought as well as his attitude toward life had become apparent by 1893, wit and humor in their different forms were the qualities most characteristic of his genius; they were most personal to it, most original, and most conspicuous. His wit was incisive and penetrating, free from bias in any special connection, exhibiting remarkable power of detachment, but unmistakably, also, it was illuminative of character, with the passage of time growing more many-sided and tolerant.

The literatures of the Latin peoples have habitually been hospitable to secondary meanings, *double ententes*, which in certain languages, such as the Italian, have been erected into definite codes of communication. The idea is unmasked by veiling it. In its cruder phases, the by-play is one of vulgar jest, but in skilful hands, like those of Bracco in his *Il frutto acerbo*, it arrives at the dignity of a continual traffic in forbidden subjects, which imparts to the entire work a perpetual grimace of sex. It was apparent to Benavente that here was a medium which was susceptible of wholly different application. More than the sexual motive falls under the social ban. The mind is alive with reticences and reservations far more interesting than any ideas which it may see fit to express. Benavente develops this system of *double ententes*, previously confined to traffic in contraband wares, into a system of multiple *ententes*, in which he attempts to

realize upon the stage the inarticulate as well as the articulate elements of intellect and of character.

For all its seeming simplicity, his style is one of the most complex and highly personal in literature. Primarily, it is suggestive. With the thought, he contrives to convey the implication. The direct meaning is not of chief concern, but its connotations in the mind which harbors it. It is a style built upon contrast, seizing upon the inconsistencies in which human nature is most intimately revealed. Given one point, the spectator is led to infer another, so that, without visible means, or the appearance of doing so, the playwright turns his characters inside out, till we view them with him from all sides at once, while at the same time we see through them. He shows us not only what his people think, but how they feel when they think it, their doubts and accompanying reservations. His theatre has been called a theatre of ideas, and it is a theatre of ideas in so far as ideas are an expression of intense intellectual activity. But Benavente is not concerned with ideas, he is concerned with thought as it formulates itself—with ideas in the making. Thus his comedy stimulates the mind to an extraordinary degree, in which it is possible for him to communicate to an audience what under more usual circumstances it would fail to perceive. This is what he means when he says that he does not make his plays for the public, but the public for his plays. He creates the mental attitude which is necessary for their appreciation, and, by a subtle psychologic or character dialectic, through which personality is revealed by sharp reversals and successive mental jolts, disclosing the innermost workings of the soul and its springs of action, he induces the auditor to become for an evening a collaborator himself, reading between the lines. His style may best be compared to a rational cubist art, in which the elements are all valid and intelligible in themselves, but which surrender their true significance only when taken in juxtaposition.

With Benavente, the story is never of predominant importance, nor in the beginning was his treatment of it unusual, or markedly individual. His plots unfolded symmetrically and were sufficient to sustain the interest through the customary sequence of situations and climaxes. Yet as his dialogue matured in fertility of suggestion, obviously a

purely objective plot, a chain of circumstance and outward fact, with laws of its own, became an unsuitable vehicle for its transmission. The tendency of Benavente's art is away from the plastic toward the insubstantial, the transparent. A fresh adjustment became imperative. What he had accomplished with satire he next essays with plot, turning his attention to its secondary and suggestive values, transferring the emphasis from the events to the inferences which wait upon them, and the atmosphere which they create, either directly or through collocation. In the field of exposition, the method may be observed in the first act of "The Governor's Wife." A similar extension of plot had been attempted by the symbolists, through the imposition of parallel meanings upon the action. With Benavente, on the other hand, the events induce their own meaning, while, in order to permit them to do this, he deprives the story of definite form. In the polychromatic spectacles, "Saturday Night" and "The Fire Dragon," belonging to the years 1903 and 1904, vast, crowded canvases which might have been painted by Tintoretto or by Rubens, teeming with an abundance too multifarious to be imprisoned within the limits of the stage, the drama is removed from the domain of structural regularity, until it depends for its effect upon the impressions derived from a panorama of incident and of situation in which the story is swallowed up and upon occasion lost from view. These dramas may be considered the romantic outburst, the ungovernable adventure of the Benaventian theatre, by very lack of restraint stimulating the imagination to a perception, at once restless and inchoate, of the awe and majesty of life.

Variety so kaleidoscopic precludes, of course, unity of impression. At best, fact is inexpressive, and Benavente seems to have felt that, independently developed, whatever its transcendence, it was susceptible only of the broadest effects. Besides, instead of reinforcing his character satire, the sweep and apparatus of these great spectacles dissipated and bewildered it. He does not return to the manner again. Instead, he subordinates the story; it ceases to be the prime factor in the dramatic fabric, or, in any proper sense of the word, the action. Henceforward the story becomes subservient wholly to the main action, which thus is unified, and

this action is entirely psychological and subjective. In life as upon the stage, says Princess Bébé, the real entertainment goes on behind the scenes. "The Bonds of Interest" provides a typical example of this new dramaturgy. Rather than the outward history of the characters, the story becomes the window through which they may be seen, as they react upon each other, and so interpret themselves. The old values are present, but they are changed. The danger which besets the reader of Benavente is not that he will fail to appreciate him, but that he will fail to appreciate him at his proper worth. His drama is a drama of character, not because it is occupied with character, but because it takes place within it, and the conflict is joined in the play and interplay of thought and emotion, of volition and inhibition, of impulse and desire, as they are colored and predetermined by tradition, by heredity, by convention, by education, and all the confused network of motive and prejudice of which conscious assertion of personality is but a part. This is the struggle of modern life, which takes place in the individual consciousness, as it accommodates itself to the complex of society and of fixed environment, the denouement of which is already foreshadowed in the mind before it is projected, imperfectly and fragmentarily, into the region of deeds and of fact.

Drama so subtle that it hovers continually among the shadows of the subliminal self, might appear to be far divorced from the stage. Yet, in reality, Benavente is one of the most theatric of writers. It must not be forgotten that he was an actor, and that as an actor he began at the bottom. The tricks of the pantomimist, the directness of the low comedian and the clown, lie at the foundation of his dramatic training. The clown's art is very simple; it is dependent upon the immediateness of the audience's response. In the popular theatres and beside the circus ring, Benavente learned that any effect may be achieved in the theatre which is capable of immediate perception—it makes no matter how subtle, how elusive the idea, so long as it is perceived. All of his effects, if they are perceived at all, are perceived easily. "The most agreeable, as well as the most artistic, expression of force is lightness." He has been enabled to ignore the common precepts of craftsmanship because of his intimate knowledge of the small change, the minor symbols of the

actor's calling, which have made possible to him endless vistas of variety and of picturesque suggestion. The task of the actor in the Benaventian theatre is to place his finger upon these minor effects, to catch the thought in the embryo, not so much to convey it as to hint its direction, to reflect the sudden flash, to pursue personality into its hiding-places, at the same time engaging the spectator and luring him along, until, passing over every facet of his subject, always moving, never still, he integrates at last this drama of the spirit with the actualities of the outward life.

"No Smoking," the first comedy included in this Second Series, is a study in obvious types and in vulgar mentality. The anecdote upon which it turns has long been familiar in Spanish, having been employed in various forms by other writers, among them by Palacio Valdés, but it is distinguished here by the singular vigor and force of the characterization, which is almost fleshly in the sense of bodily presence conveyed. The piece was contributed to the Teatro Lara, Madrid, in 1904, upon the occasion of the benefit of the comedienne Leocadia Alba.

"The Governor's Wife," acted at the Teatro de la Comedia in the same city three years previously, is a mordant satire, associated with the name of the actress, Rosario Pino, who created the rôle of Josefina. The political life of the provinces, compact of unsavory intrigue, and dominated by the perpetual pressure of the strong arm of *caciquismo*, or the boss system, will be found to be mirrored exactly both in incident and in atmosphere. The satire, however, never becomes utilitarian, nor does it concern itself with what is called in the literary phrase "the castigation of follies and vices." Rather than satiric, the play is profoundly ironic, descending quickly from the sphere of institutions and of politics to that of the personalities which underlie and explain them. Nowhere else has the author shown a keener eye for the niceties of human imperfection, or been so sceptical of the grip of virtue upon the line of salvation.

Upon the technical side, the comedy is interesting as an example of objective realism. It is a fabric of infinite detail, of detail heaped upon detail. In the first act, in particular, the incidents are approximately all of equal value, nor have

they any conspicuous emotional quality which imparts to them coherence, or lends them unity. The detail has been related, composed, if one will, with exceptional adroitness; nevertheless, the effect arises chiefly from the absolute veracity and minute photographic property of the incidents themselves, by cumulation, as they follow each other in the bustling sequence of a provincial holiday. The material insinuates its significance without interference or interpretation upon the part of the playwright. The living scene appears before the spectator, and he comes to participate in it in so many ways that he is taken off his guard, until he acquires at last a sort of citizenship in the town of Moraleda—that abode of conventional morality—whose people he seems to know casually, as upon the street, or at the café, some fairly well, perhaps, even thoroughly, while there are others whom he scarcely remembers at all. By far the most negative and corrosive of his works, “The Governor’s Wife,” confirmed the misapprehension of Benavente at one time prevalent, as a purely destructive, maliciously clever writer.

“Princess Bébé” and “Autumnal Roses,” which complete the volume, on the other hand are serious dramas, of positive content. The former, published in 1905, but withheld from the stage until 1909, is a work composed by the author peculiarly to please himself. “Sometimes I say what I think, sometimes I have regard for the opinion of others.” Certain resemblances between events in the play and others not yet forgotten at the Spanish Court tempered in some degree the warmth of its reception when acted by María Guerrero and Fernando Díaz de Mendoza during their tenancy of the Teatro Español, although this, indeed, was not surprising when it is considered that the initial performances took place at what was then, to all intents and purposes, the National Court Theatre. “Princess Bébé” is the embodiment of the aspirations and ebullience of youth, boundless in energy, yet tormented with uncertainties and misgivings, the natural hesitations of the mind which has not yet found itself. As a painter of manners, Benavente may here be found at his best. Few plays are so various or contain so much, few disseminate an equal atmosphere of breeding or display like perception of the futile, exacerbated sentimentalities of the prostitute, the criminal, and the

degenerate. The heroine is enmeshed in a snare of artificialities, seeking for truth amid environments that are most thoroughly false, from the pretentiousness of the Court through the pretenses of the theatre and the mimicries of the demi-monde, down to Bohemia and the underworld, counterfeits which are most deceptive of all.

Simple while it is most complex, brilliant in wit yet engagingly human, exact in portraiture yet at every moment incomparably suggestive, "Princess Bébé" floats before the eyes of the spectator like a web of delusions so transparent that they become luminous as truth. If the basis of reality when disclosed seems little more substantial than the unreality of appearances, it must be remembered in mitigation that the hopes of youth are high. In the words of Professor Federico de Onís, "this type of comprehensive interpretation, which plumbs the evil in humanity later to affirm the idealistic, has been the essence of what is called Spanish realism; it is the æsthetic conception of Velázquez and of Cervantes. The work of Benavente is a modern form of the same conception, and is, therefore, essentially Spanish in spirit." It is strange to one familiar with the national history that the modern Spanish writers who have attracted most attention abroad should have been those of the florid tradition of Murillo and of Calderón, of Echegaray, and of Blasco Ibáñez, rather than of the high Castilian stock.

"Autumnal Roses," presented at the Teatro Español in 1905, is a comedy of Madrid life. Even before he is a Spaniard, Benavente is a Madrileño. He has drawn in this play a veracious picture of the financial circles of the capital city, of the manners of the upper middle class, which is exceptional in its simplicity. No drama could be more innocent of adventitious appeal, yet during the decade which followed its production, "Autumnal Roses" has assumed by common consent a foremost place in the contemporary Spanish theatre. It is characteristic of Benavente's plays that they grow upon the mind; not only by repetition, but through the subtlety of its charm, each succeeding play seems to cast some reflection upon and to illuminate unsuspected recesses in those which have preceded it. Properly, the comedy is the complement, or, in a sense, the sequel to "Princess Bébé," which it follows almost directly in order

of composition. One is a drama of youth and the other of middle-age; in one the subject is the venturing forth of the spirit, in the other its return home again, when the disillusionments of the wander-years find their compensation in the family and beside the hearth. It is an error, however, to pronounce "Autumnal Roses" to be a glorification of bourgeois morality, or an apology for marriage when liberally construed; to read the comedy in such a light is to misconstrue and to miss its meaning. The story of Isabel and Gonzalo is laid in the home, because it is in the home that the revelation of character is most intimate and most personal, and there it is that the pleasures and sorrows of life are most quickly and most keenly felt. Yet even the home has its conventions, its prescribed manners and modes of living, in which, too, according to Benavente, the heart does not reside—much less does it in any ideal perfection. Life matures in the affections, where alone its fruits are cherished, in those attachments in which the years at last yield up their reward, after persistent struggle and patient endurance, after trials and imperfections and misunderstandings, slowly ripening into esteem, and the respect which is of long growth, made but the gentler by much forgiving, and coming to all of us in due season, in one form or another, who have borne ourselves well in the journey through life.

The theatre of Benavente is dynamic, because it deals with thought in the process of crystallization. Hence the secret of its power. It anticipates appearances, and makes short work of artificialities. Although all classes of men and women are reproduced in his work, there are no types. Through all his scenes, one will search in vain for one hero, and one will search in vain for one villain. The machinery of life plays small part in his analyses, which delve beneath occupation. The human terms of problems engage him, the postulates which inhere in their solution, the working out of these in feeling and ways of thought, and in acts afterward of human and irremediable import. He is free from nostrums and posed problems; he neither courts nor wins the unimaginative, the dull mind, nor is his drama more portentous than life, but from page to page and scene to scene it lives with a strange, vivifying power, which infuses even the slightest

detail with the significance of the greatest, and makes his work in its totality one of the most human documents that literature has known. Benavente's is the most sophisticated of arts, because it is the flower of an old, anciently corrupt, disillusioned civilization, which has at length awakened spiritually and searched itself, taking account of the evil with what there is of the good, and set itself again to become strong.

MAXIMS BY BENAVENTE AND OBSERVATIONS UPON THE STAGE

The public demands that serious things be treated frivolously, and that nonsense be taken seriously. What it will not tolerate is serious treatment of serious things, or speaking flippantly of nonsense.

Everything that is of importance to the proper understanding of a play must be repeated at least three times during the course of the action. The first time half of the audience will understand it; the second time the other half will understand it. Only at the third repetition may we be sure that everybody understands it, except, of course, deaf persons and some critics.

The public defies comprehension. No, the public is merely curious; but curiosity passes, while respect remains.

He who thinks every day cannot think the same thing every day.

To paint in broad strokes, but so artfully that at a distance it appears as if we had painted in miniature, is at once the problem and the art of the theatre.

One-fourth part of the morality, rectitude, and sense of justice which an audience brings into the theatre would, if left outside, make the world over into paradise.

Prince Hamlet, although the prototype of doubt, like all sceptics had faith in what was most preposterous: the probability that a theatrical performance would disclose anything.

Art is a furious individualist.

All of us are shocked once a year by what goes on about us for the rest of the year without shocking us, or, indeed, attracting our attention at all.

Art is the one subject upon which aristocracy and democracy agree. Both invariably vote for foolishness and vulgarity.

It is not easy to surprise the heart while the intelligence holds out.

With very notable exceptions, the prepossession of good actors for bad plays is as general as it is deplorable.

Many, upon going to the theatre and seeing a detestable play, think mistakenly: "I could do this thing better myself." The fact is that they could do it better, only their better would be worse for the dramatic effect. In the theatre, even to be bad requires a badness all its own.

No, the theatre, like all other forms of art, is many-sided, and neither can nor should live by exclusion. All styles are good, even the dull, if there is any adequate reason for its being so. Only dulness for its own sake is inadmissible; it is not like art for art's sake. Let us be sincere with ourselves. When we read "Don Quixote" or "The Divine Comedy," or Shakespeare's plays for the first time, were we not upon the point of finding them a little tiresome? If we had permitted ourselves to be overcome by the first impression, and had ceased to read, should we not have sacrificed the most profound artistic emotions of our lives?

It is not more difficult to write a good play than it is a good sonnet, only one must know how to write it, just as one must a sonnet. This is the principal resemblance between the theatre and other forms of literature.

The theatre must be loved for itself, perhaps with greater devotion than any other form of art. The true playwright must have passed his life in the theatre, he must have seen all the plays and all the actors within his reach, and he must have acted himself. Remember that no small part of Shakespeare and Lope de Rueda and Molière was the actor. To the playwright the world must be a vast stage, men and

women must be tragic heroes and heroines, or comedians in one immense farce. The most beautiful sights of nature must appeal to his eye as stage scenery. And then, too, he must have the knack of finding his plays.

If ideas were to determine what we wrote, we should always write the same thing, and what we wrote would forever be the same flummery. Art must be spontaneous, like the play of children, an expression of life, of strength, of natural abundance. Later, art will take on order and, again like the play of children, fall into a certain rhythm, so that what was at first mere activity, will presently become beauty and at last will be found good.

The impressions of the artist are not evanescent, nor do they linger in the memory like common recollections of pleasure or of pain. The artist's brain is ruminant of emotions, transforming what at first was only heat into heat and light combined. Thus, through a constant effort of will, what was his life becomes at last the soul of his art, so that every artist can exclaim with Mme. Dorval, seeing the audience rise in enthusiastic applause: "They do well to applaud me, for I have given them my life."

The spirit of the truly great artist differs from that of the mediocre talent, who is always thoroughly at home in his works, which seem to belong to him, where he is comfortable and satisfied. To the true artist, rather, work is the prison of genius, and something forever hovers over it with the melancholy yearning of an infinite longing, seeking an outlet that it may be free. The best of his genius is not what is expressed in his works, but what escapes from them.

Benavente's theory of translation is outlined in his preface to his own rendering of "King Lear":

"Modern criticism prefers the type of translation which is known as interlinear. It distrusts translators, and with better reason it distrusts the literary translator. Truth, however, like virtue, is always to be found upon middle ground. An interlinear translation is preferable for the use of those who are already familiar with the language of the original work, or, else, who are engaged in the study of it.

To others, however, it must always prove difficult, and disagreeable as well.

"A perfect translation would be one which succeeded in conveying the spirit of the author in its entirety by means of the words which he himself would have employed, given his temperament, his individual style, his period, and even the identical circumstances under which the work was composed, had his medium of expression been the language into which it is about to be translated. To effect such an ideal translation, the translator, of course, must be none other than the author himself.

"In this translation of mine . . . I have sought clarity before everything else. . . . After clarity, I have sought fidelity; whenever it has been possible for me to be a faithful translator, I have been one. Finally, I have contrived that my translation should not be altogether colorless and cold. Rather than to correctness of language or to elegance of style, I have attended to the life and spontaneity of the dramatic dialogue. Shakespeare was not only a playwright, but he was what we call to-day a man of the theatre. His sublimities and his buffooneries, his great qualities as well as his great defects, are always those of the playwright who is deeply versed in the theatre, and who is familiar with his public. He was not an actor and a manager for nothing."

These principles have been followed in the translation of these plays.

NO SMOKING

FARCE IN ONE ACT

FIRST PRESENTED AT THE TEATRO LARA, MADRID, ON THE
EVENING OF THE THIRD OF MARCH, 1904

CHARACTERS

A LADY

A YOUNG LADY

A GENTLEMAN

A CONDUCTOR

SEVERAL VOICES

NO SMOKING

A compartment in a first-class railway-carriage.

The GENTLEMAN is seated alone when the curtain rises.

A VOICE. [*Outside*] Three minutes! The train stops three minutes!

ANOTHER VOICE. Water! Fresh water! Who wants water?

ANOTHER VOICE. Here, girl! Water!

The LADY and the YOUNG LADY enter.

LADY. Hurry up; it only stops a minute. I thought we'd die in that compartment. See if we have everything. One, two. . . . Where's the basket? The basket!

YOUNG LADY. Here it is, mamma.

LADY. Gracious! What a fright you did give me! The one thing, too, your aunt asked us to bring with us— She would always have insisted that we lost it on purpose.— Good afternoon.

GENTLEMAN. Good afternoon. I beg your pardon, but as I was riding alone, although it says "No Smoking". . . .

LADY. For goodness' sake, don't stop upon our account! Smoke as much as you want to—it doesn't bother me, or my daughter, either. We are used to it. Her poor father, my first husband—who is now in glory—was never without a cigar in his mouth. As he bit off one, he lit it with the butt of the other. And my second husband—who now rests in peace—they were alike as two buttons; you could scarcely tell the difference. I had a difficulty at one time myself, a

suffocating feeling, all stuffed up here—terrible distress—and the doctors were telling me that it was asthma and that it wasn't asthma— Well, I smoked then myself—aromatic cigarettes—which didn't do me any good, either, by the way, I can say that. So you see as far as we are concerned. . . . My dear, what on earth are you doing with that basket? Don't you see that you've got it with the holes against the wall, and the poor animal will be smothered to death? It's a cat, yes, sir, an aunt of my daughter's—she requested us to bring it with us, as a favor to her. She is my sister-in-law. It began to howl the moment the conductor came after the tickets, and this poor child had to sit there and sing and laugh so as to drown it—so the conductor couldn't tell who was howling. I should say it was a favor!

A VOICE. [*Outside*] All aboard! Passengers who are going will please take the train!

LADY. Good! They are afraid we might be left behind. However, we are off now— But you needn't think you are inconveniencing us. You can't annoy us by smoking. Before we changed we were travelling in the ladies' compartment, and we transferred to this one as soon as we could because there were people in it one simply couldn't travel with; they were out of the question. You would think that people who travelled first class would have manners, that they would know something. But not a bit of it! Believe me, if you want to find out what people are like, play cards with them, or watch them eat, or else go travelling. You'll find out then soon enough. There was a woman in that compartment—I say she was a woman because I don't know what else to call her—with her companion—she must have been her companion, she was with her anyway—well, I can tell you I was mortified. I was ashamed—such a conversation! Between the two of them! They might as well

have been sitting in their own parlors. As far as that goes, you know, speaking for myself, a widow twice, it was nothing to me; but before my daughter . . . I had to make her sit with her head out of the window all the way. It was pretty chilly for her. You can see for yourself she has taken cold. And she's got a cinder in her eye, too—worse luck! Her eyes are the best part of her.

YOUNG LADY. For mercy's sake, mamma! What will this gentleman think? I hope you don't mind mamma.

LADY. Keep quiet, for heaven's sake! Such women! And they didn't stop there. One of them, tired of gabbling, I suppose, takes out a book if you please, and settles herself down to read. And what a book! There was a woman on the cover in her chemise, fanning herself.

GENTLEMAN. Evidently hot. . . .

LADY. You needn't tell me it was hot.

The GENTLEMAN, with a detached air, reaches for a book which has been lying on the seat beside him.

GENTLEMAN. You cannot always be sure. Sometimes the publishers—so as to attract attention— And then it turns out that there is nothing in the book, after all.

LADY. You needn't tell me. Why, didn't she begin to laugh right out loud, and the other one wanted to know what she was laughing at? And she started in to read to her, at the top of her voice. It was too much for me this time. There we sat in that compartment, helpless, wondering what was coming next. I made up my mind I'd have to ask them to show some consideration for the girl. I'd better have held my tongue! How they did go for us! I didn't ring the alarm and stop the train because I was too excited. It isn't safe to travel with people who begin to gabble and talk the minute they lay eyes on you, and tell you all their private affairs just as if you were one of the

family. People ought to be careful what they say. The very least that happens is that they tell you some scandal or dishonesty or something of the sort about Mr. So-and-so—that he is this way or that he is that way, and the next thing you know he turns out to be your father. And a person who would talk like that about your father, what wouldn't he say about your uncle or your cousins or any one else in the family? And there you are!

The CONDUCTOR enters.

CONDUCTOR. Good afternoon.

LADY. The tickets, child! What have you done with the tickets?

YOUNG LADY. Why, you have them, mamma!

LADY. No, my dear; I gave them to you—the last time they came round. I am so sorry— [*The cat begins to howl.*] My dear! [*The YOUNG LADY begins to sing.*] I can't find them; you must have them. What's that? Ah, yes! Of course! Wait a minute. Here they are——

CONDUCTOR. Thank you. Good afternoon. [*He goes out.*]

YOUNG LADY. What did you ask me for? You knew perfectly well that I couldn't stop singing.

LADY. I wonder what that animal has against the conductor? I told you it was a nuisance; now judge for yourself. If it wasn't that my relations with my sister-in-law are a little bit strained—you understand—I don't want to give her a chance to do any talking— Well, the fact is she wasn't pleased because I married a second time. Just as if I would be likely to forget my first husband any sooner on that account! Put yourself in my place. Suppose you had been a widow of twenty-six without any visible means of support, and the man who was in love with you, without any offense to his predecessor, without reflecting upon his merits in the least, was the best man in the world—I ought

to have known, though, that it couldn't last. Something was sure to happen— Good Lord! What's the matter?

GENTLEMAN. We are coming to a tunnel.

LADY. Horrors! [*They pass into a tunnel. After a moment they come out*] Don't look at that gentleman. I was the one who pinched you on the arm—

GENTLEMAN. Madam!

LADY. But that was not all. My sister-in-law is of a very domineering disposition. She is the moneyed member of the family, and, naturally, she expects everybody to bow down before her. She wants them to grovel. Well, that isn't my style. If I say anything she doesn't like, it results in an explosion. Now she has set herself on marrying my daughter to a nephew of hers about whom we know absolutely nothing. It is a delicate subject. A woman only marries once; at least, the first time that is all that she counts on. She plans no further ahead. She says he is a nice fellow, but I have made inquiries— Look out of the window, my dear— I hear he is very fond of the ladies. But what of that? All men are alike. Would you believe it, when we had been married only eight days, I surprised my first husband kissing the nurse?

GENTLEMAN. Did you have a nurse when you had been married only eight days?

LADY. For my little sister. For heaven's sake, what did you think?

YOUNG LADY. Mamma! Mamma! Look at all the little rabbits!

LADY. Don't talk to me about little rabbits. You can take your head in now. We were discussing your *fiancé*.

YOUNG LADY. What does this gentleman think?

LADY. He thinks the same as I do. He says that without knowing him thoroughly— And he is perfectly right—

GENTLEMAN. [*Aside*] Where did this woman get the idea that I said anything?

LADY. Are we coming to a stop?

YOUNG LADY. Yes, we are stopping now. That was a long run, mamma.

GENTLEMAN. I believe I shall get out and stretch myself for a moment. With your permission, ladies——

LADY. Be sure you have time enough.

GENTLEMAN. Yes. The engine takes in water.

[*The GENTLEMAN goes out.*]

A VOICE. [*Outside*] Two minutes! The train stops two minutes!

ANOTHER VOICE. Water! Who wants water?

ANOTHER VOICE. Buy your cinnamon-cakes! Cinnamon-cakes!

YOUNG LADY. Mamma, I want some cinnamon-cakes.

LADY. Didn't I tell you when you were travelling to be careful what you ate? We've had spice enough already. We're a great deal better off in this compartment. That seems to be a very nice gentleman. Probably he is taking a little vacation— I think we saw him in Madrid one afternoon with a fat lady, that day we were at the Lyric to see "The Iron Ring." Don't you remember the woman who sat in front of us with the big hat, so that you couldn't see? She cried through all the sad parts.

YOUNG LADY. I don't remember, mamma.

LADY. When I get a good look at a person I never forget. I'll ask him when he comes back.

VOICES. All aboard! Passengers who are going will please take the train!

LADY. Goodness, there's the bell! The gentleman hasn't come back— See if he's on the platform— Can't you see him?

YOUNG LADY. No.

LADY. Here! Stop! Don't start the train! There's a gentleman missing!— I wonder where he can be? The train is moving— He's left— What can the matter be? Too bad! What a pity!

YOUNG LADY. He hasn't moved to another compartment. Here are his things.

LADY. Of course he hasn't. We had better throw them out of the window. He can pick them up on the platform. It's the best we can do for him.

YOUNG LADY. Yes! It's the best.

LADY. Help me! Hurry up!

YOUNG LADY. There they go!

LADY. They belong to a gentleman who has lost the train! Keep them for him! He'll be out in a minute!— Didn't he know that the train doesn't wait for anybody? I am so sorry!

YOUNG LADY. We forgot the book.

LADY. Never mind; it's all right. It won't be like the other one, anyhow— What a pity!

YOUNG LADY. [*Looking at the book*] What a pity!

LADY. If there isn't another train to-day and his family should be waiting for him and he should be ashamed to let them know— I hate to think of it! It's too horrible for words!

YOUNG LADY. [*Giggling*] Too horrible!

LADY. God bless me! It's too bad. While he was here, we had an escort, as it were. We were having a very agreeable conversation. It was easy to see he had acquired a great deal of information.

YOUNG LADY. He was very good-looking. Listen, mamma; where did you say that you pinched me in the tunnel? On the arm?

LADY. What do you want to know that for?

YOUNG LADY. Nothing. Because it hurts.

LADY. I am so nervous; I'm always afraid of those tunnels. You never can tell what is going to happen in a tunnel. However, it's too late now for regrets— Don't you feel hungry?

YOUNG LADY. I should say I do. It always gives me an appetite to ride on the train.

LADY. If you travelled more maybe you'd pick up faster. Now you look like half a Philopena— Hand me down the basket— Better see how the cat is.

YOUNG LADY. Hello, kitty! Puss! Puss! My, what eyes! They shine like fire.

LADY. I'm thankful it hasn't given us any trouble, though. It's time to eat.

YOUNG LADY. Another stop.

LADY. Good. We can spread the things out now.

A VOICE. One minute! One minute!

ANOTHER VOICE. Water! Who wants water?

LADY. These breaded chops ought to taste good. Spread the paper for a cloth— Give me a napkin— Don't upset the wine-bottle—

The GENTLEMAN re-enters.

GENTLEMAN. I beg your pardon, ladies—

LADY. Eh?

YOUNG LADY. Oh!

LADY. What! You again?

GENTLEMAN. Yes, I was riding in the smoking-car.

LADY. But weren't you left behind?

YOUNG LADY. We thought—

GENTLEMAN. But my luggage? How is this?

LADY. Oh! I beg your pardon!

YOUNG LADY. You see—

LADY. We thought you had missed the train, and, so as to oblige you—

YOUNG LADY. We threw it out of the window.

GENTLEMAN. Who told you to do that?

LADY. To accommodate you—

YOUNG LADY. How were we to suppose—

GENTLEMAN. But what am I to do now? The devil! These women— I ought to have known that you would be up to something!

LADY. If you are going to take it like this, sir—

GENTLEMAN. How the devil do you expect me to take it?

LADY. Why didn't you tell us what you were going to do?

GENTLEMAN. Every time I go out do I have to hold up my hand to you? If you weren't irresponsible—

LADY. I don't allow gentlemen to call me irresponsible; nor my daughter, either. Where are your manners?

GENTLEMAN. Madam! Would you recognize them?

LADY. You don't know what you are talking about. You are the one who is irresponsible.

GENTLEMAN. I?

LADY. Yes! You're mad! You're crazy!

YOUNG LADY. Why, mamma!

VOICE. Passengers who are going will please take the train! All aboard!

LADY. You can telegraph when we get to the next station.

GENTLEMAN. I can, can I?— My bags! My bags!

LADY. A lady ought never to travel without a private compartment.

GENTLEMAN. Oh, travel in the dog-car!

LADY. I? In the dog-car?

GENTLEMAN. Chained.

YOUNG LADY. Mamma! Mamma!

All talk at the same time.

PRINCESS BEBÉ

**SCENES FROM MODERN LIFE
ARRANGED IN FOUR ACTS**

**FIRST PRESENTED BY THE COMPAÑÍA GUERRERO-MENDOZA
AT THE TEATRO ESPAÑOL, MADRID, ON THE EVENING
OF THE THIRTY-FIRST OF MARCH, 1909**

CHARACTERS APPEARING IN THE FIRST ACT

THE EMPEROR MICHAEL ALEXANDER OF SUAVIA

PRINCE STEPHEN

PRINCE MAURICE (aged fifteen)

PRINCE ALEX (aged eight)

THE CHANCELLOR

HERR STIRGER, THE TUTOR

PRINCESS HELENA

PRINCESS MARGARET (aged fourteen)

BARONESS ESTHER VON ROSENBERG

COUNTESS ADELAIDE VON ROSENKRANZ

Also Attendants at the Imperial Palace

THE FIRST ACT

An apartment in the Imperial Suite of the Palace of Suavia.

At the rear, a garden covered with snow.

PRINCESS MARGARET, PRINCE MAUPICE, PRINCE ALEX, and
the COUNTESS VON ROSENKRANZ surround the TUTOR,
who expounds the daily history lesson.

TUTOR. However, every day could not be glorious in the history of the Kingdom of Suavia. Michael VIII was a prudent king, a model of public and private virtues. His wife, Edvigia, was a model queen, as all the queens of Suavia have been since the beginning of the seventeenth century, although, as we have already seen, previous to the seventeenth, particularly during the fourteenth and fifteenth, there may have been an occasional one of unhappy memory.

COUNTESS. Pardon, Herr Stirger, but Queen Theodelinda, to whom you refer, has been gravely disparaged in my opinion through being called the Messalina of Suavia. Have you read the recent monograph of Herr Tomberg, published in the *Journal of Historical Sciences*? It would appear that the name of Theodelinda had been completely vindicated. Herr Tomberg proves that the unfortunate eccentricities of the queen did not reflect so much upon herself as upon her husband, who, it seems, condoned them.

TUTOR. Very possibly. May we proceed, Countess?

COUNTESS. Do so, and pardon again. Queen Theodelinda has always been such a sympathetic figure to me!

TUTOR. We now arrive at a dark page in the reign of Michael VIII, unjustly called the Simple by his detractors, who were many. But for them his reign was glorious. The battle of Kuntz was not lost through the cowardice of our

troops or the incompetence of our generals, as might be imagined, but through treachery——

COUNTESS. This time I must interrupt you without asking pardon. There never was any such treachery as that to which you now refer. You are speaking of one of my ancestors, whose memory has been completely vindicated from that infamous calumny.

TUTOR. Countess, pardon me. I was not aware that Baron von Rosenkranz of the battle of Kuntz was related in any way to the present Counts of Rosenkranz.

COUNTESS. The succession is direct, except for a charge of bastardy, which is an honor to our house, as the blemish was of royal blood. To be sure, historians speak of a betrayal of his country, but who are historians? I could show you over six hundred letters from the archives of our family, all of them in Baron von Rosenkranz's own hand, had you leisure to examine them, in which he explains away the vile accusation. It is impossible to read them without being convinced. Teach history to the Princes of Suavia, among whose loyal vassals the Rosenkranz have always been and are. As the last, the most unworthy of their line, it is my duty to declare to the Princes of Suavia, on behalf of my ancestors, that there never was a traitor, either to his king or to his country, whose name was Rosenkranz!

PRINCE MAURICE. Of course we should not believe it, Countess. Herr Stirger did not wish to give offense.

TUTOR. On the contrary, my aim is to emphasize virtue and heroism in our lessons, passing over all doubtful points in silence, or touching them but lightly, as the case may be. They are not altogether absent from public or private history.

COUNTESS. It is as His Majesty desires. History should be a mirror of virtue to those who some day must be kings.

PRINCE MAURICE. Fortunately, since the beginning of the seventeenth century the Kings of Suavia——

COUNTESS. Highness, since your glorious dynasty ascended the throne.

PRINCE MAURICE. They have all been mirrors of virtue.

PRINCESS MARGARET. The kings and the queens have, but since the beginning of the twentieth century the princes and princesses——

COUNTESS. Highness! Take care! His Majesty has prohibited expressly reference or allusion to the recent unhappy events which have saddened his heart, alas!—and the hearts of his loyal subjects.

TUTOR. Alas!

PRINCE MAURICE. The Emperor told us yesterday that our uncle and aunt, Prince Stephen and Princess Helena, were both dead.

PRINCE ALEX. [*Aside to MARGARET*] I have a surprise for you later.

PRINCESS MARGARET. [*Idem*] What is it?

PRINCE ALEX. [*Idem*] Wait until we are alone.

PRINCE MAURICE. [*Idem*] What does Alex say?

PRINCESS MARGARET. Some foolishness or other. Wait until we are alone.

Trumpets play the Royal March outside.

COUNTESS. His Majesty returns to the Palace.

PRINCE MAURICE. Then the study hour is over....

TUTOR. Yes, that will be all for to-day.

PRINCESS MARGARET. Does the Emperor visit us or shall we go to him?

COUNTESS. As yet I have received no instructions. The confusion at Court because of the arrival of— I forgot that it was not to be mentioned.

PRINCE MAURICE. Oh! What harm can it do? The ar-

rival of Prince Stephen. You can tell it by the humor the Emperor is in. And the Empress!

PRINCESS MARGARET. The Empress refused to see us.

PRINCE ALEX. She saw me.

PRINCESS MARGARET. You are the favorite grandchild.

PRINCE MAURICE. The Emperor is furious. When I asked if I could go sleighing in the park yesterday, he forbade me.

COUNTESS. I must obtain the order of the day. Be discreet during my absence. Herr Stirger will remain with you.

TUTOR. Although I have not yet had luncheon——

COUNTESS. I shall not be long. [*She goes out.*]

PRINCE MAURICE. Alex! Alex! It's all right. Herr Stirger doesn't mind; we are alone now. He dislikes the Countess as much as we do.

PRINCESS MARGARET. Wasn't it jolly while he was telling us about the treason of her old ancestor?

PRINCE MAURICE. He promised to do it yesterday. We knew it would make her angry.

PRINCESS MARGARET. Did you notice what she has been doing to her hair?

PRINCE MAURICE. Yes, the old cathedral has put in stained glass. Alex, what have you got? Hurry up!

PRINCESS MARGARET. Before the Countess comes back.

PRINCE ALEX. Here it is. . . . *L'Illustration Française*. Guess what is in it. Look!

PRINCE MAURICE. Give it to me! Let me see.—Watch the door, Herr Stirger. Tell us if any one is coming.

TUTOR. Perhaps I had better see myself first. . . . Oh, Highness! Where did you get this paper?

PRINCE ALEX. In the Empress's room. She had it hidden away, but I found it.

TUTOR. You surprise me.

PRINCESS MARGARET. Nobody cares what he does, because he is the spoiled darling. It would be different if it were one of us. What does it say? "Latest Scandals at the Court of Suavia."

PRINCE MAURICE. With pictures of Prince Stephen and la Königsberg, his wife. . . .

TUTOR. His morganatic wife.

PRINCE ALEX. His mistress.

TUTOR. Highness!

PRINCESS MARGARET. Say favorite, Alex.

PRINCE MAURICE. Yes, a *cocotte*. It sounds better in French, doesn't it? French is the diplomatic language.

TUTOR. Your Highness appears to have developed a talent for piquant observation, wholly improper in a prince. Princes should be of a benevolent, optimistic turn of mind. The lady is an actress, not a *cocotte*, as you miscall it.

PRINCE MAURICE. What is the difference, as long as she is good-looking? Look out! Is any one coming?

TUTOR. No, no, no one— Ah! she is good-looking.

PRINCE ALEX. Oh, she is pretty! Yes, she is!

PRINCESS MARGARET. His Highness, Prince Alex, thinks that she is pretty. What do you know about it, little imp?

PRINCE ALEX. Well, she is prettier than the women in our family. The paper says so: "In the Royal Family of Suavia the women are all insignificant. The Princes, however"—listen to this—" *Ils sont le type accompli de la beauté virile.*"

PRINCESS MARGARET. I shall box your ears for that.

PRINCE ALEX. I dare you to!

TUTOR. Highness! She is your sister.

PRINCE ALEX. What is the use of being silly?

PRINCE MAURICE. Stop quarrelling. Hello! More pictures. . . . "Princess Helena of Suavia, popularly known as Princess Bébé."

PRINCESS MARGARET. She is better-looking than la Königsberg. How distinguished!

PRINCE MAURICE. "Herr Albert Rosmer, with whom the Princess"—

TUTOR. Put the paper down, Your Highness. When you see their pictures on the same page, the rest is suggested. Give me that paper; it ought not to remain in your hands another moment. Suppose this should be brought to the attention of Their Majesties? These French papers stop at nothing which can prejudice a ruling house. France is a country without faith, without religion; it is a blot with its republic upon the face of Europe. Kings and princes should unite against it, as they did in the days of Napoleon. These articles make me blush, they—they— [*Continuing to read in spite of himself*] Yet there is something about them which is fascinating, the style.... These Frenchmen are the devil!

PRINCE MAURICE. What does it say?

TUTOR. Nothing, nothing— Lies! Slander!

PRINCE MAURICE. The Emperor!...

PRINCESS MARGARET. A nice fix we are in!

PRINCE ALEX. Confined to our rooms for a week!

TUTOR. The storm always bursts upon my innocent head.

The EMPEROR and the COUNTESS ADELAIDE enter.

EMPEROR. Have you finished the lesson?

PRINCE ALEX. Grandfather! Grandfather dear!

EMPEROR. Alex, what is this? Military salute! I have appointed Your Highness to my body-guard. You have been made sergeant.

PRINCE ALEX. Shall I wear a cuirass over my uniform? Promise to make me lieutenant next year, like Maurice.

PRINCE MAURICE. Next year? Wait until you deserve it.

PRINCESS MARGARET. You will be promoted just as he was—for your fighting qualities.

PRINCE MAURICE. Oh, I do wish we might have war!

EMPEROR. Not so fast! War is never desirable, especially now that it has become so expensive. Herr Stinger, are your pupils making rapid progress? I charge you to be strict with them. Always, always forget that they are princes, or rather never forget it. Bear in mind that it is for them to be first in the rigid performance of duty. What paper is that you hold behind your back? Its appearance seems familiar. One moment— What? Is it French? Upon my soul! How did this paper come into the Palace? Herr Stinger, is this your conception of history, of literature? Countess Adelaide, is this the influence which you exert over the Princes? To permit such papers in their study hour! How did this paper come into your possession? There is no security any longer in the Palace. I never know at what moment I may lay my hand upon an anarchistic proclamation, or a libel, or upon publications such as this, with pictures, with stories——

COUNTESS. Your Majesty, I am at a loss to understand how this paper escaped my attention.

TUTOR. His Highness Prince Alex may explain to Your Majesty.

EMPEROR. You? Have you seen it? You!

PRINCE MAURICE. Too bad you have joined the army! You will be shot.

PRINCE ALEX. [*Bursting into tears*] Grandfather!

EMPEROR. What is this? You are speaking with your superior officer. Military salute! Explain how this paper came into your possession.

PRINCE ALEX. I found it in the Empress's room; I didn't know that there was anything in it——

EMPEROR. Silence! Of course there is nothing in it. In the Empress's room, did you say? Women are curious creatures. Countess, you may return it to the Empress.

COUNTESS. If I might offer a suggestion to Your Majesty, perhaps if the Empress were to continue in ignorance. . . .

EMPEROR. Quite superfluous. She will be more careful another time, now that she is advised that she has a grandson who is so enterprising. [*Aside to the COUNTESS*] She will be proud of him, too, I assure you. [*The COUNTESS goes out*] Attention, Sergeant! For this breach of discipline, which is your first, you are forbidden to go skating this afternoon, and for the next three days you may eat by yourself, apart from your brother and sister.

PRINCESS MARGARET. What a blessed relief!

PRINCE ALEX. Don't you envy me?

PRINCESS MARGARET. It serves you right.

PRINCE ALEX. I could tell grandfather some nice stories about you and Maurice.

PRINCE MAURICE. You are a fine soldier—a tattle-tale and a coward.

PRINCE ALEX. Who? I?

EMPEROR. Silence! That will do. Herr Stirger, continue your instruction in the library. I require this apartment for a private conference, as it has a separate entrance.

TUTOR. We have concluded our studies for the day.

EMPEROR. Good! Then the Countess may accompany the Princes to pay their respects to the Empress. Margaret, my dear, a kiss; Maurice, your hand. Alex. . . .

PRINCE ALEX. Will Your Majesty forgive me?

PRINCE MAURICE. Coward! A man never apologizes.

EMPEROR. I forgive you this time, but if it happens again—Maurice, read him the army regulations.

PRINCE ALEX. May I go skating with Margaret and Maurice?

EMPEROR. Of course you may.

PRINCE ALEX. I don't mind eating by myself, because Maurice and Margaret always tease me.

PRINCESS MARGARET. We do, do we? He is intolerable.

PRINCE MAURICE. He is a glutton; he eats with his fingers when the Countess is not looking.

PRINCE ALEX. You dip your bread into the gravy.

PRINCESS MARGARET. And you stuff pastries into your pockets.

PRINCE ALEX. It's for Mogul.

EMPEROR. Silence!

TUTOR. Highnesses, His Majesty grows impatient.

EMPEROR. Yes, you may retire.

The PRINCES and PRINCESS withdraw with the TUTOR.

An USHER enters, followed shortly by PRINCE STEPHEN.

PRINCE STEPHEN. How shall I address you? Your Majesty, father— You have always been a father to me, since I never knew my own. As head of the family, his brother, Emperor, I have always loved and respected you.

EMPEROR. Always? Sit down. No, sit nearer. Although my decision not to see you was irrevocable, although I had determined that you should never enter the Palace again, nevertheless, as your complaints have become incessant and you have even had the bad taste to carry your diatribes to the radical press, thus lending aid and comfort to my enemies, and to those of the dynasty—

PRINCE STEPHEN. May I—

EMPEROR. I have not finished. We shall never arrive at an understanding through correspondence or by means of emissaries, so I have preferred to arrange this interview, which will remain private, that is, unless you give it out to the papers yourself, intoxicated with your new rôle of journalist and your pose as Prince who is thoroughly up to date. It would make one of those typical interviews which are the pride and glory of the modern press. If the Empress were to learn of this, the shock would cost her an illness. Her health is already

precarious, as is mine, thanks to our beloved nephews and nieces, whose only thought, apparently, is to sweeten the final years of our reign, or to hasten its close. As if you were not bad enough, Helena focuses the attention of the entire civilized world upon us and our house.

PRINCE STEPHEN. It is surely not my fault that my cousin has chosen this moment to agitate her divorce, not to speak of her elopement with her husband's secretary.

EMPEROR. But you are the one who began it. She would never have dared, if it had not been for you.

PRINCE STEPHEN. I fail to see the similarity; my position is very different from that of my cousin.

EMPEROR. Perhaps, but two scandals in three months are too much in any family. In a ruling dynasty they are intolerable. This is a restless age, when every hand is raised against us. Monarchies do not exist to-day by virtue of divine right or inherited prerogative, but through personal prestige, through the respect and admiration which royalty inspires by its behavior. Making ourselves ridiculous in the eyes of those who no longer believe in us, and pathetic in the eyes of those who still do, is an ill augury for the future.

PRINCE STEPHEN. I must decline to admit having fallen into either extreme, although I very well understand that my conduct may appear odious to courtiers and conservatives. But are you familiar with liberal opinion? Frankly, I do not believe that any intelligent person could laugh at me, or take exception to my marrying for love the woman I adore.

EMPEROR. Have you noticed that the liberal and revolutionary papers are the ones which have printed all the jokes at your expense, or rather, I should say, at ours? That shows their appreciation of your modernity, your liberalism, and how highly they value this love of yours, which in their eyes ought certainly to appear admirable.

PRINCE STEPHEN. No doubt it does. It is not a question of ideas, however, but of interests. I am a Prince; it is to their advantage to make me appear ridiculous—personally, in my love, and in my marriage. They do not respect me because I am a Prince, yet they blame me because I love like an ordinary man.

EMPEROR. Precisely. You have hit upon the reason for the universal disapprobation which your conduct arouses, both among your enemies and your friends. You were content to enjoy the prerogatives of Prince so long as 't suited you to do so; now you wish to share the immunities of a private citizen, because it happens to be convenient. That is the difficulty, that is what the public with unerring instinct condemns. Every rank has its obligations, which are in proportion to its privileges.

PRINCE STEPHEN. What privileges attached to mine? I might live the prescribed routine, provided I manifested no initiative, and never had an original thought of my own. You conferred the command of a regiment upon me; no sooner did I introduce some reforms, which would have improved the condition of my subordinates, than the government took alarm, and I was reprimanded severely. I visited the colonies, and returned to publish my observations. The book was cut down by the censor to a few insignificant banalities, for which I blush to be held responsible. If I desire to contribute to charity, I must restrain my generosity so that my contributions may not be greater than yours, nor than those of others who are nearer the throne. I am a lover of art, yet I am not able to express my admiration for an artist or for his work, unless it accords with the official art standards and is thoroughly orthodox. It is the same with everything. These are my privileges. My initiative, my intelligence, my sympathies are never permitted to overstep the

bounds which are fixed for them by authority—bounds as inviolable as the frontiers of our country. What have you to offer in exchange for a life lived without love?

EMPEROR. Without love? Is there no other love than that woman's?

PRINCE STEPHEN. Not for me. A man never loves more than once in his life; the only love for him is that of the woman whom he loves. Of course, conceivably, there are a great many persons in the world a man might love, just as there are a great many women, a great many countries, a great many mothers. But our love is the only love for us; that is why we think it is the best—because it is ours, like our own country, or our own mother. Nobody has any choice in these things, yet we always think that ours is the best. The only one possible is ours.

EMPEROR. You were scarcely in a position to make a wise choice when you persistently absented yourself from Court and avoided association with women of your own rank and class, to hover behind the scenes of a theatre and cultivate the society of a comic-opera singer.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Of an adorable, an intelligent woman, who has taught me to know myself, behind the scenes—which, no doubt, seems a terrible place to you—to live my own life, surrounded by real people who are living their own lives and succeeding strictly upon their merits. She has cured me of my prejudices, she has strengthened my will, she has aroused my conscience——

EMPEROR. No doubt she has. Excellent theories à la Ibsen, à la Tolstoy, à la Nietzsche, those perturbers of weak minds, who, by the way, should have been born in Suavia. We should have attended to them and have made an example. Living your own life? Yes, the infallible excuse for every imaginable fault and delinquency. Being yourself,

your *self*! As if life were ever possible for one without the co-operation of all, without the laws of society! Good! Since these are your ideas, your sentiments, be consistent to the end. Your life is that which you mould by your own will, independently of the disabilities of your rank. Well, then, live it, and do not expect to enjoy the privileges of your former station.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Do you ask me to submit to the injustice of being deprived of them? I am in a worse position without them than the man who never knew what they were. Such persecution is implacable. Your humblest subject who has committed an unspeakable crime has his day in court, he is not condemned, as I have been, in defiance of all the laws of your Empire, which guarantee to the most abject slave the right of disposing of his hand and of choosing the companion of his heart freely.

EMPEROR. Those same abject slaves whom your poetic imagination encourages you to envy, would very gladly exchange that inestimable right for the privileges and income which you enjoyed as Prince, with no further effort than the accident of your birth, which was considerable.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Then I have nothing to hope?

EMPEROR. Hope to be happy. What more do you wish? You will make a great mistake if you are not. The question is, which is preferable—love, or the income and dignities of a Prince? Certainly no better guarantee of happiness could be desired than the assurance that your love loves you for yourself, for yourself alone, the man himself, as Shakespeare expresses it.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Very well. I shall ask nothing further of you, but you need expect nothing of me in return. I am released from all obligation to my princely dignity. Make no attempt to prevent what I purpose doing in spite of it.

EMPEROR. Only do it out of Suavia!

PRINCE STEPHEN. What did I tell you? Life is more difficult for me than for an ordinary man. I am no longer Prince, yet the laws which protect others have no validity for me. You banish me from my country.

EMPEROR. To do you a favor. You say that you are anxious to support yourself; it would be difficult in Suavia. You are too well known here. Nobody would offer you a menial position, while if the opportunity were a brilliant one, you would feel, naturally, that it had not come to you upon your merits as a man, but as the Emperor's nephew, Prince of Suavia, a reflection which I am confident would prove most offensive. [*Cheers outside*] But why these cheers? What is the matter?

He strikes a bell. The CHANCELLOR enters.

CHANCELLOR. Pardon, Your Majesty. . . .

EMPEROR. How is this? What are these shouts?

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty, it is unprecedented; impertinence without parallel in my experience——

EMPEROR. It is? Speak!

CHANCELLOR. Princess Helena has arrived at Court. Upon alighting from the train, she took a sleigh before it was possible to prevent her, and drove straight through the heart of the city to the Palace gates. And she is with us now.

EMPEROR. [*To the PRINCE*] Now you see what you have done! Shall I tolerate this? She has heard that you are here, so she dares to presume! I always regret promptly any leniency I may show. What is the meaning of these cheers?

CHANCELLOR. A crowd has gathered out of curiosity. The students acclaim the Princess, taking advantage of the opportunity to demonstrate against the government.

EMPEROR. Which should have anticipated the outbreak and have been prepared for it. How has the Princess arrived

without advices having been received of her departure? Has the Department of State no intelligence? Our Secret Service deserves the name. Is this street demonstration to be permitted for the remainder of the day?

CHANCELLOR. The guard will clear the vicinity of the Palace. Your Majesty is familiar with student character. Princess Helena is popular with the younger element; her love-affairs interest. Besides, a young poet, admired in Bohemian circles, has composed a poem which the students sing and shout on the street-corners, a sort of pæan to love, a satire upon——

EMPEROR. Upon me, is it not?

CHANCELLOR. Upon the government, Your Majesty.

EMPEROR. Oh, no! If it had been upon the government, the poem would have been suppressed and the author would have been in prison by this time. Do you say that Princess Helena is in the Palace?

CHANCELLOR. It seemed inadvisable to stop her. She inquired for the Empress.

EMPEROR. Who surely refused to see her. It is a pleasure reserved for myself!

COUNTESS ADELAIDE *enters*.

COUNTESS. Your Majesty, have you heard? Your Majesty, Princess Helena——

EMPEROR. Yes, yes. Where is she?

COUNTESS. The Empress has collapsed. She refused to receive Her Highness; then her nerves gave way. The Court is in an uproar. Your Majesty, we adored Her Highness!

EMPEROR. Indeed? Where is she?

COUNTESS. Pardon, Your Majesty. As soon as she learned that the Empress had refused to receive her, she flew at once to the Princes. No one thought it advisable to stop her, and she is closeted with them now.

EMPEROR. With the Princes? Quick! There is no time to lose. Send her to me, I command it. Do you hear, I command it! Who attends Her Highness?

COUNTESS. The Baroness von Rosenberg.

EMPEROR. Ah! Has the Baroness the temerity to present herself in the Palace? Good! I have an account to settle with the Baroness. [*The COUNTESS retires*] And yet you intrude yourself into my presence, you beg me to condone, to approve your behavior! To think that I have railed all these years against the inroads of socialism, of anarchy, the forces of revolution! No, their bombs are preferable a thousand times, they reinforce and buttress the principle of authority by a sort of natural reaction, but this anarchy from above, this dissolution of all decency and morality, is infinitely more dangerous. Better fall before a blow than decay gradually and disintegrate!

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty is quite correct.

EMPEROR. The punishment shall fit the offense, I promise you.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Your Majesty, may I retire? Argument is useless in your present state of mind. I am not eager to meet my cousin. Obviously, her offense is responsible for our suffering the same punishment for faults which are distinct. I have not been recreant to my duty; my love is noble, it is legitimate. Permit me to kiss Your Majesty's hand. My affection will never fail. My only request is that you do not pursue me with your displeasure now that I am banished from Suavia; I ask it as a favor. My fortune is not large, so that my task will be difficult. I cannot forecast my future means of support--I only know that whatever they may be, they will not be unworthy of a gentleman, although he may no longer be Prince. Good-by, Your Majesty. Some day you will judge me more justly.

[*The PRINCE goes out.*]

CHANCELLOR. The poor Prince has my sympathy.

EMPEROR. How so? He has the strength of mind to have his own way; let him fortify it by opposing mine. A Prince of Suavia married to a comic-opera singer! It seems incredible.

CHANCELLOR. Love, Your Majesty.

EMPEROR. Love? Then why did he marry?

CHANCELLOR. I am told the lady is virtuous.

EMPEROR. Always distrust that braud of virtue which keeps one eye upon marriage. I am told that she is an experienced woman. My nephew is an ass, utterly ignorant, both of women and of the world. If she had been a respectable actress, a legitimate artist in one of the subsidized theatres—but a comic-opera singer, who appeared only a month ago in “La belle Hélène” and “La Fille de Mme. Angôt”! It would be impossible to present such a woman at Court. As they announced her, the ushers would whistle the airs which they had heard her sing at the theatre the evening previously. —Ah! The Princess! Retire, but remain within call.

The CHANCELLOR goes out. PRINCESS HELENA, PRINCE MAURICE, PRINCESS MARGARET, PRINCE ALEX, *the* COUNTESS VON ROSENKRANZ, *and the* BARONESS VON ROSENBERG *enter.*

PRINCESS HELENA. Oh, uncle!—Your Majesty....

EMPEROR. Do not attempt to embrace me. [*To the PRINCES and PRINCESS*] Who desired you to come?

PRINCESS HELENA. Don't scold them! They all love me; and I love them, too. Everybody seems to love me; the crowds ran after me, shouting, down the streets. Nobody has forgotten Helena—Princess Bébé, as they used to call me—for I was the life of the Palace in those days, and I really believe I left my heart behind me when I went away. You do love me, don't you, you dear children? Margaret, poor girl, never let them trifle with your heart as they did with

mine; I wish you all the happiness which I might have found in the world. Don't you yield one jot when they attempt to marry you to a man whom you do not love, and never can.

PRINCESS MARGARET. Don't cry, Helena! Helena, I don't want you to go away!

EMPEROR. That will do. Countess, remove the Princes.

COUNTESS. Highnesses——

EMPEROR. Helena and I must confer for the last time.

PRINCESS HELENA. For the last time? You are inflexible.

PRINCE MAURICE. Grandfather is horribly angry.

PRINCE ALEX. Will all the toys you promised me surely come to-day?

PRINCESS HELENA. Of course they will! Just you wait and sec. I brought you an automobile, and an encampment with soldiers in it that really walk, and cannon that really go off.

PRINCE ALEX. Oh, how I love you!

COUNTESS. Follow me.

PRINCESS MARGARET. Grandfather——

EMPEROR. What is this? You are confined to your rooms for the remainder of the day. We have already had sufficient.

COUNTESS ADELAIDE *retires with the PRINCES.*

PRINCESS HELENA. Your Majesty . . .

EMPEROR. Well, why do you come? Do you fancy that I am so weak that a flood of tears can induce me to forget the duty which I owe to our house, even supposing that they were genuine? If I did not judge you as Emperor, yet as head of the family, I should be obliged to repeat what you already know: in my sight you are dead.

PRINCESS HELENA. You are very cruel. I asked for advice, for protection, and you refused to hear me. Why did you oppose my divorce?

EMPEROR. A divorce in our family?

PRINCESS HELENA. Apparently the laws of your Empire are not equally for all men. I have better reason than most to appeal to them, since you married me against my will.

EMPEROR. To a Prince who was worthy of your love.

PRINCESS HELENA. You have witnessed my sufferings, Baroness.

BARONESS. Alas! Poor dear!

PRINCESS HELENA. The Prince was a brute, and you know it. You knew me, too; you knew that I could not be happy with such a man.

EMPEROR. The performance of duty is a gratification which we have always with us, as it depends wholly upon ourselves. Doubtless it is one of the subtler forms of happiness, but for that very reason appropriate to those of us who have been born into exalted station—whether through good or evil fortune.

PRINCESS HELENA. You are a man and a sovereign. It is easy for you to compensate yourself for whatever sacrifices you may make by noble deeds and glorious, victorious exploits. But love is the only motive of a woman's heart—without love, duty, ambition, sacrifice, the moral law, even religious faith, have no meaning; but with love she can accomplish all things without so much as a thought of duty, or obligation, or punishment, or reward, simply because it is love. Would you condemn me to live without love all my life? A woman might resign herself to living without being loved, but never to living without loving. How would it be possible to live? I could have done my duty by the Prince as his wife if he had not loved me; but that was not his only fault. He is a gross, contemptible person, as you know, incapable of inspiring one single regret, not even pity, which is the last refuge of the heart that struggles to maintain a show of love when love itself is gone.

BARONESS. True, Your Majesty! True, and we know it. Poor dear!

EMPEROR. Baroness, I shall have a word with you later. It was a happy thought to attach you to the Princess Helena. You have been zealous in the cause of decorum.

BARONESS. Your Majesty!

EMPEROR. I should have inquired into your past history more fully.

BARONESS. Your Majesty! Your Highness! I protest; I cannot submit to this. I am insulted, outraged, yet I am unable to defend myself, because you are Emperor. Such an insinuation is unworthy of you. You insult the Baroness von Rosenberg!

PRINCESS HELENA. Not so loud.—Your Majesty is severe with the poor Baroness.

BARONESS. The accusation is horrible—atrocious! Is this the reward of years of faithful service? I have sacrificed my life to Your Majesty. Her Highness is at liberty to repeat the advice which I have given her. No doubt Her Highness has made mistakes, she may have committed indiscretions even, which I regret, but you have no idea what she might have committed had I not been present to prevent her. She would have eloped two months before she did, if it had not been for me.

EMPEROR. Have we gained anything, in your judgment, by the delay?

BARONESS. I appeal to Her Highness. Naturally, I sympathized with her desire for a divorce, but in her love-affair with Herr Rosmer I have been her most consistent, her most vigorous opponent.

EMPEROR. Probably that explains how it was that they met at your house.

BARONESS. It was already too late at the time, Your Majesty, if an open scandal was to be avoided.

EMPEROR. But the flight? Who promoted it?—a fitting end to the adventure!

BARONESS. The Princess threatened suicide, and I was confident that she was irresponsible. How shall I convince Your Majesty? I adore the Princess.

PRINCESS HELENA. Baroness, I shall be grateful to you forever.

BARONESS. I have been insulted, I have lost the favor of the Emperor, the honor of a Rosenberg has been called in question! The Emperor reflects upon my past—my past, which was exemplary in virtue. I throw myself upon Your Highness for consolation, my Princess whom I adore!

PRINCESS HELENA. I shall never desert you, Baroness, my heart, my life, my soul!

EMPEROR. This is too much, upon my honor! Baroness, you are insufferable. Never appear again at Court, no matter what the provocation.—Let us have done once for all. I assume that your excuses are identical with your cousin's, who is another hero of love romance. Apparently you have very little faith in love as the ideal road to happiness, since you desire to have your allowance as Princess continued as well. Am I right?

PRINCESS HELENA. You insult me. I merely ask that you grant my application for a divorce, so that I may dispose of my hand freely, as my heart dictates.

EMPEROR. After running away? What good would that do you? Marriage with Herr Rosmer, as a correspondent, would be extra-legal, to say the least.

PRINCESS HELENA. I am unable to see it. Herr Rosmer travelled with me; it was his duty as the Prince's secretary.

I was not in love with him at the time; the Baroness will tell you so.

BARONESS. Upon the honor of my ancestors!

EMPEROR. Baroness, I remain unconvinced. An end to this nonsense. The scandal which you have created throughout the civilized world by your conduct, the indelible blot which it has cast upon the good name of our house, not to speak of the moral and political disorders which your escapades have encouraged in the Empire, deserve punishment which shall be exemplary. Princess Helena, there is one way in which you may obtain pardon, and only one—indeed, in some measure it may be said to justify it—you may have yourself declared insane, and submit to confinement in one of the royal residences for an indefinite period, dependent upon your good sense and deportment.

PRINCESS HELENA. Thanks. If I am guilty, I prefer to be responsible for my acts. Have you no saner suggestion for my reformation? Frankly, I fail to appreciate your solicitude for the family honor. The Empire would feel itself far more secure, in my opinion, if it were to believe that we were capable of falling in love in our right minds, than if it were to get the idea that we are all of us such crazy imbeciles that we are incapable of anything. If you once begin to declare members of our family insane, you will have occupation to last you for the rest of your life. It will be a sorry outlook for the nation to find itself governed by a family in which there are so many persons without sense.

EMPEROR. Is this a joke? Are you laughing at me?

PRINCESS HELENA. No, I am not laughing. I realize now that it was a mistake for me to throw myself upon the mercy of a man who never had any.

EMPEROR. Outrageous insolence! Out of my sight! You are banished from Suavia!

PRINCESS HELENA. Yes, we are banished because we live our own lives in the sincerity of our affections, because we refuse to learn hypocrisy of you and of the Princes you tolerate about your throne, and who are worthy of it, because they maintain a hollow pretense of love and respect for what nobody any longer either loves or respects. Prince Michael may remain at Court in the enjoyment of all his dignities; he will never marry an actress like Prince Stephen, because he is provided with three or four of them already; Princess Leonora may remain—she will not hear of a divorce; nothing is so convenient as a husband to cover up her antipathy to marriage; Princess Clothilda may remain, who never allowed her husband to interfere with her. They are virtuous officially, they neither shock nor jeopardize the security of the Empire! I am not built that way. You are right; I was a fool to appeal to you and your laws, when all I had to do was to satisfy my own conscience. Could anything be more ridiculous? Why appeal to others for what we have already in ourselves? Why revolutionize the world when it is so easy to revolutionize our own consciences? From this hour forth, I give you warning: I, Princess Helena, have become a ferocious anarchist. The world, your Empire, your precious society, the whole of it, with its laws, its morality and its lies—well, you can have it, it is good enough for you; let it remain as it is; there are people who do not know how to live in any other way—but I tell you that a bomb has burst in my heart, in my life, that has blown into a thousand fragments all this world, with its laws and its lies! Let me out, Baroness. Follow me!

PRINCESS HELENA *and the BARONESS sweep out.*

EMPEROR. I am dizzy—my head goes round. Give me air!

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty—

EMPEROR. Prince Stephen and Princess Helena leave

Suavia this very day without respite of one hour at Court upon any pretext whatsoever. The Crown Council which was set for this afternoon is suspended. Was there business of importance to attend to?

CHANCELLOR. The new law of Social Reform.

EMPEROR. A proper occasion for its promulgation! Are we to become public laughing-stocks? Shall I pretend to reform society when my own house, my own family, are in the state which all the world sees? Is there anything else?

CHANCELLOR. Nothing of importance. Oh, your signature to a decree conferring a pension upon our national poet.

EMPEROR. National poet? Poets, philosophers, authors are to blame! They unsettle men's minds, they turn the world upside down. Undisciplined fools—madmen, all of them! Do not talk to me about poets. Ah! By the way, that student's song about the Princess, her amours. . . . Better suppress it. Do you happen to have heard it by any chance? What does it say?

CHANCELLOR. I don't remember; it has no merit. It advises the Princess to forsake the Court and courtiers, and devote her attention to students and true lovers—to form a court of love. There is nothing in it.

EMPEROR. Certainly not. What does it say about me?

CHANCELLOR. Nothing that I recall. Ah, yes! there is a refrain:

“Little dove,

What does the Emperor know about love?”

EMPEROR.

“What does the Emperor know about love?”

Good! That will do for to-day; you may retire. I need rest, to recuperate. . . . Keep close watch on the press. It has been allowed too much liberty of late.

CHANCELLOR. We have taken proper precautions already.
Your Majesty may repose. Rest in peace.

EMPEROR. Good! Good night.

The CHANCELLOR goes out.

EMPEROR.

“Little dove,
What does the Emperor know about love?”

Curtain

CHARACTERS APPEARING IN THE
SECOND ACT

PRINCE STEPHEN

PRINCESS HELENA

COMTESSE DIANA DE LYS

ELSA KÖNIGSBERG

THE BARONESS VON ROSENBERG

COMTE DE TOURNERELLES

HERR ALBERT ROSMER

M. DE CHANTEL

CONDUCTOR WULF

MME. CLEMENCIA WILF

GOTTFRIED WILF

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

THE DUCHESSA D'ARCOLE

Ladies, Gentlemen, and Attendants

THE SECOND ACT

Grand Hall in the Casino of a winter resort upon the Riviera, situated upon the border between Italy and France.

DIANA DE LYS is greeting the QUEEN OF SHEBA. Visitors and attendants in the background.

DIANA. Of course it is chance, but the same thing has happened two years in succession. As I was beginning to win, I saw you. It is the first time that anything has come my way this season. Did you run down from Paris?

QUEEN. Jaunting around.

DIANA. When did you arrive? I always look over the lists.

QUEEN. Since my hit in the pantomime "The Queen of Sheba," at the Olympia last winter, I have changed my name. You were in Italy at the time; it was a popular departure, fully equal to your sensation in "Le Bain de la Parisienne," only mine was more fully undress, especially at the end before Solomon. That rascally Flo-Flo invented a light effect——

DIANA. I should have returned from Italy if I had known it. How were the notices?

QUEEN. Wonderful! Lorraine wrote me two columns of insults; I can never thank him enough. Since then nobody thinks of me but as the Queen of Sheba.

DIANA. I seem to recall the name; I wondered who that new one could be.

QUEEN. Well, it was I; only it was nothing new.

DIANA. Are you alone?

QUEEN. Yes, this is a pleasure trip. How are you getting on? Are you still with the Comte? What million is he in now? In Paris, the report is that he is down to his last.

DIANA. Very likely, at the rate he is going. If he spent it on himself, it would not be so bad; but the trouble is he likes to see it spent.

QUEEN. As *blasé* as ever, I suppose?

DIANA. He has reached the limit. Nothing excites or stirs his interest in the least. Everybody here lives off him, including his secretary, Chantel.

QUEEN. I remember that fellow. He is clever.

DIANA. No more than the rest. The Comte buys carriages and automobiles which he never even sees; his friends and his friends' friends ride in them and show themselves off. He deals out thousand-franc notes by the handful, so that others can play, who lose, naturally. He never goes near a table himself. If you tell him that a play is good, he sends his friends, and then forbids them to mention it afterward. At one time dress was his hobby, but now he leaves all that sort of thing to his secretary.

QUEEN. Has he slipped you along, too, to the secretary?

DIANA. No, he still loves me. I am the only person who can do anything with him, as you will discover when we return to Paris; I shall be Comtesse de Tournernelles. I should like to see more of you here, very naturally, but my friends are rather select; I cannot afford to take any chances.

QUEEN. Who are your friends?

DIANA. My dear, with art and religion a woman enters any society. Christians and artists will receive anybody, and thank you for the opportunity. Although one must be a little discreet, and careful to keep up appearances.

QUEEN. So you have gone in for religion?

DIANA. No, I am reserving that for my old age; for the

present I get on with art. I belong to a musical coterie; we adore music—Wilf's music. What music! I suppose you never heard of Wilf? He is scarcely in your line. He was an extraordinary genius who died in a madhouse, raging, because nobody appreciated his music. After his death, his widow, Mme. Clemencia Wilf, and his son Gottfried—

QUEEN. What a horrible name!

DIANA. The title of a symphonic poem by his father. The son and widow, together with a little group of enthusiasts, made up their minds that Wilf's music should be admired and appreciated by everybody, so they organized a company and began giving concerts, some of them conducted by Wulf—have you never heard of Wulf?—others by Gottfried Wilf. Nobody paid any attention at first; some even went so far as to throw potatoes; but, little by little, a change for the better set in, and soon all fell at the feet of Mme. Wilf. People lost their heads, the number of admirers increased—

QUEEN. And you lost yours, too—I can see it.

DIANA. Nonsense! Nobody was fooled, except a few earnest admirers, who are necessary in any business. However, the widow, the son and the conductor, not to speak of the musicians, understand perfectly how to take advantage of persons who are perfectly willing to be taken advantage of, so long as they appear superior to others who do not understand and appreciate the music of Wilf. Some very distinguished names occurred on the list, so I exerted my influence with the Comte de Tournernelles to have him take stock in the Wilf and Wulf Concerts Company. The other shareholders welcomed me with open arms. Much was forgiven, because I had loved much—the music of Wilf, their idol. Now I belong to the smart set, I associate with people who are *chic*, with princesses, the nobility, with great artists. I am preparing my *entrée* to the fashionable circles of Paris this

winter upon the arm of the Comte de Tournerelles and the wings of Wilf's music. You cannot tell me anything about art, my old partner.

QUEEN. It takes my breath away. If you had been a man, you could have gone anywhere.

DIANA. The one thing I have never wanted to be is a man. Pardon, some friends of my group . . . We shall see more of each other again.

QUEEN. You have not told me who is here yet.

DIANA. It is awfully dull. No one does anything any more; everybody comes for some purpose. I never saw it so stupid before carnival. La Zaragoza, the Spanish dancer, is the only woman who is enjoying herself; it is the same with her everywhere.

QUEEN. Is that wild beast in town? I should not have come if I had known it. We had a fight at Trouville last summer, right out in the middle of the Casino. They called the bets off on both sides when they stopped us.

DIANA. I might be interested later. Good luck, until next time.

QUEEN. *Au revoir*, Comtesse. [Goes out.]

MME. WILF, WULF, WILF, ELSA KÖNIGSBERG, and the
DUCHESSA D'ARCOLE enter.

DIANA. Is the opera over?

MME. WILF. We were able to endure only the first two acts, out of sympathy for the artists. Opera? Imagine calling such a thing opera!

WULF. Mankind has suffered a long time under the imposition.

WILF. Yet there are persons who sit there and actually listen to it as if it were music.

ELSA. The Comtesse displayed rare taste in declining to accompany us.

DIANA. Although I should not have hesitated if it had not been for the music. I met an old school friend on my way to the opera-house; we could not resist stopping and recalling old times. Does the Prince join us this evening?

ELSA. The Prince had the bad taste to sit out the opera.

DIANA. Well, is there any news? Has the concert been arranged? Has the Casino accepted our proposition?

WILF. It has in the abstract; we have only to discuss the details. We anticipate a great sensation.

ELSA. I am charmed with your programme.

WILF. As the audience will be intelligent, we need scarcely give that feature consideration.

WULF. It comes fully prepared.

MME. WILF. It is no longer a question of initiating a brood of neophytes, but of appealing to a chosen circle of the *élite*, who are already believers.

WILF. You will realize that you have never before listened to music. We shall play the three great symphonic poems: "The Slumber Poem," "The Poem of the Idea," and "The Poem of Silence."

MME. WILF. On the whole I consider the last the greatest work of Wilf.

WULF. Nobody has been able to understand it as yet.

WILF. It ceases to be what it is the moment that it is understood.

MME. WILF. It had only one performance in London, but five ladies fainted. Two of the first violins committed suicide a week after taking part in the concert.

WULF. I never conduct the work without—shall I say religious?—preparation. I confine myself to my rooms during the week preceding the concert; I speak to no one—I bury myself in the rare, the divine pages bequeathed to us by the Master. I receive whatever food is necessary in order to

support the ordeal, and at last rise to a state of mystic exaltation, without which it is idle to aspire to a proper interpretation of the sublime masterpiece. After the concert is over, Mme. Wilf will tell you the condition I am in.

MME. WILF. Unfortunately. We apply a cold compress, and bring him to with a strong punch, reinforced with rum. It is a work which can be performed safely only now and then. My son is not able to conduct it as yet.

WILF. Although I have studied since the age of six. My interpretation differs radically from that of Herr Wulf.

WULF. But you are not able to justify your readings. For example, why should the second movement of "The Poem of the Idea" be *lento*, while you take "Silence" *vivace*? The ideal interpretation would be one in which "Silence" was not heard at all, while the "Idea" should be passed over as rapidly as possible, with the swiftness of thought. I hope and pray to find an orchestra some day which is capable of catching the idea.

MME. WILF. Fascinating, is it not? What does Your Highness think? What do you think, Comtesse? And you, too, Duchessa?

DUCHESSA. [*Reviving*] Ah! I beg your pardon. . . .

DIANA. The Duchessa is still at the Italian opera.

DUCHESSA. No, it is difficult to acquire new tastes at my age. Nothing appeals to me so much as "La Sonnambula." As a concert number, give me "La Mandolinata."

DIANA. Oh, Duchessa!

DUCHESSA. [*Aside to DIANA*] Nonsense! I know good music when I hear it—and good society.

DIANA. Dissimulate.

DUCHESSA. Yes, if we are to continue good friends.

DIANA. Hush! They may hear us.

DUCHESSA. What if they do? They are no better than we

are; we are all playing a part. This Princess is not a princess, you are not a countess, and I am not a duchess. The widow of that musician is probably not a widow, if you care to look into it, nor is her husband's music music if it comes to be heard. We all know what we are doing here, and the best thing that others can do is to seem not to know anything.

DIANA. Duchessa! You surprise me.

DUCHESSA. Not much. We both of us know a good time when we see one, and we have seen our good times, too, but not this season.

DIANA. We were young and thoughtless then; we have had leisure since to meditate.

DUCHESSA. It is beyond me how you can put up with that Princess, who only two months ago was singing in operetta. I have heard all she knows on a hand-organ. Now it appears she is not only an artist, she is a great lady.

DIANA. I shall give myself away if you make me laugh. [*Aloud*] The Duchessa confesses the superiority of the new music. At bottom, it is the only music.

DUCHESSA. It is at bottom. I feel it; I understand it. Although— [*Humming. A pause*] Undeniably that is beautiful; it always makes me cry.

ELSA. Why, Duchessa!

DUCHESSA. However, when we complete our temple, our Bayreuth—

WULF. Ah! Our Bayreuth? Bayreuth is another tradition which is doomed presently to disappear.

MME. WULF. Although we must concede Wagner some merit. He was a timid precursor.

WULF. Who had his successes; but compared with our temple, our vast concert-hall, upon a mountain-top, beside the sea—it should be on an island, if possible—

WILF. Where there will be ample space for all the devotees to assemble once a year.

WULF. As we hope and believe, our dream is about to be realized.

MME. WILF. We have unlimited capital for its construction.

WILF. Not only for the temple, but for hotels and restaurants, and whatever else may be necessary.

WULF. We anticipate a great rush.

MME. WILF. Probably; although it is a phase we prefer not to dwell on. We are thinking only of *him*.

WULF. Not of him—of *it*—*it*, his idea. Rather than of what he did, we prefer to think of what he might have done.

MME. WILF. To *it*—*it*, his ideal idea!

DUCHESSA. [*Aside to DIANA*] If these people are not making money out of this, then they are the greatest fools I ever heard of.

The COMTE DE TOURNERELLES and CHANTEL enter.

COMTE. Amusing mistake, was it not? Suppose some gentleman had presented himself and had insisted upon a duel? In that case it would have been still more amusing.

CHANTEL. If you had fought him yourself. I approached Her Highness on your behalf, under instructions, as your emissary.

COMTE. At a distance, I thought she was a *cocotte*. But you should have known better.

CHANTEL. How was I to tell? I thought the same when I got near. She was sitting at one of the tables playing *trente et quarante*. An elderly woman occupied the next chair, who was far from respectable. One played red, the other black; meanwhile they bet on the side, and laughed as they played.

COMTE. Capital! What did you do?

CHANTEL. I suggested a fresh combination. They were

delighted. You know—it never fails. They placed their money at my disposition——

COMTE. How much of it have you left?

CHANTEL. Not a *sou*, I assure you; I lost it all. The Princess—it was then that she turned out to be a princess—persisted in sliding her bare arm around my shoulder. I confess that I was nervous. I pressed my foot against hers beneath the table——

COMTE. But what did she do?

CHANTEL. It wasn't she, it was the old lady. As soon as I recovered sufficiently, I launched my proposal—your proposal—and the Baroness, whose title I forget, broke loose with a torrent of the most villainous abuse, in the course of which I discovered who the distinguished lady was, whom we had misjudged so lightly.

COMTE. But what did she do?

CHANTEL. I cannot say that she seemed offended. She stood up and laughed.

COMTE. Encouragement to continue. Who is this Princess? Not Princess Helena of Suavia, who eloped with her husband's secretary?

CHANTEL. Yes, and she is here with him now, waiting until the Emperor consents to a divorce.

COMTE. A divorce? What does she want of a divorce? Not to marry the secretary? It is unworthy of her. I am attracted to that Princess. I might take up the adventure myself at the point where you left off. A princess is deserving of some attention.

CHANTEL. Funds are running low. I understand that the happy couple are negotiating a loan, regardless of cost. The Emperor is starving them out—siege and famine. The Prince Consort announces that he will no longer be responsible for the debts of his wife, the other relatives withhold

their support so as not to fall into the Emperor's bad graces, *trente et quarante* fails to prove more propitious—

COMTE. Good! Keep me advised of further progress. I shall introduce myself to the Princess to apologize for my secretary.

CHANTEL. Thanks.

COMTE. Wilf's music will furnish an excuse for a concert at my villa, to which I may invite Her Highness.

CHANTEL. But suppose Diana becomes suspicious?

COMTE. Diana has a talent for becoming suspicious. However, I have promised to marry her, whatever happens. High society will be a good thing for us both, and high is high.

CHANTEL. Yes, and it will be high. By the way, how much do you intend to subscribe to the Wilf and Wulf Concerts Company for their new theatre? I am unable to rest; the mere mention of money makes those people nervous.

COMTE. Five thousand francs more than the largest subscriber.

CHANTEL. There are subscriptions for fabulous sums.

COMTE. The fifty thousand francs, which I have promised already.

CHANTEL. Ah! You have a letter. . . . La Zaragoza, the Spanish dancer, writes me—that is, she writes you—carnival is approaching and she is anxious to make a hit in the Battle of Flowers. She wishes to appear well at the Casino dances.

COMTE. Ten thousand francs.

CHANTEL. *L'Écho de la Côte d'Azur* publishes an article by its most distinguished contributor, devoted wholly to you. He says—

COMTE. Three thousand francs.

CHANTEL. *Le Moniteur du Grand Monde* publishes your portrait—with mine.

COMTE. Three thousand five hundred.

CHANTEL. I have dropped during the week——

COMTE. Why persist in these ridiculous combinations?

CHANTEL. At what hour will it be convenient for you to sign checks to-morrow?

COMTE. At what hour? At what hour will it be convenient for me to sign checks? Don't ask me that question again. Any hour will be convenient. Make inquiries about the Princess: as a diversion, I find her more interesting. I must speak to these people.

CHANTEL. Meanwhile I shall resume my investigations.

[Retires.]

COMTE. [*Joining the group*] Ladies and gentlemen.... Your Highness.... Madame!

MME. WILF. I believe that my son has already expressed our appreciation of your generous contribution to the cause.

COMTE. Do not mention it again.

WULF. You have the soul of an artist; you comprehend our work and its significance.

WILF. We hope to inscribe your name in our temple as patron.

DIANA. We plan to be present each season.

COMTE. [*Aside*] No! That is too much.

DIANA. Silence! Leave it to me.

COMTE. Would it be possible to arrange a little rehearsal at my villa, previous to the public concert? Your husband's music, as it seems to me, requires a select audience if it is to be appreciated, an atmosphere of intimacy, of sympathy, of....of....

DIANA. Perhaps we might be able to arrange a quiet concert.

WILF. I can see no objection to that.

MME. WILF. [*Aside*] Fifty thousand francs deserves some substantial recognition.

WULF. Monsieur le Comte need only name the day, and I assume responsibility for a satisfactory result.

ELSA. May I volunteer to sing the lament, that marvellous passage?—

MME. WILF. Your Highness! Is it possible? If you do, it will be the first time that it has been rendered by a pure artist.

ELSA. I shall bring to it all the pathos of my art.

WULF. The soul of the master will rise in his grave as you sing.

MME. WILF. He will be sure to hear you. We entertain no shadow of doubt.

COMTE. [*Aside to DIANA*] We shall hear Her Highness, too—at less distance.

DIANA. It is a far cry from “La Belle Hélène” to Wilf’s music.

COMTE. No further than the jump from stage princess to princess in fact.

DIANA. Although double somersaults are less usual in high art than in good society. Anybody can rub elbows with a king or a grandee, but Shakespeare and Beethoven are something quite different. I am not as much of a fool as you think.

COMTE. You certainly are not.

DIANA. I failed as an actress and determined to be a countess, and found that I was built for the part.

MME. WILF. As the hour is late, we must retire. Gottfried has still to consecrate the better half of the night to his labors.

WULF. I also must husband my energies for the approaching concert.

ELSA. Apparently the Prince has endured the opera to the end. We had hoped to retire early this evening ourselves.

COMTE. No, the Prince has left the theatre. I saw him at one of the tables a few moments ago.

ELSA. At one of the tables? Disgusting!

COMTE. He always becomes more animated about mid-night.

ELSA. Will you lead me to him at once?

COMTE. With the greatest of pleasure.

MME. WILF. Again we say good night. [*To the COMTE*] Do not fail to advise us so that we may set a date for the concert.

COMTE. Oh! Yes, indeed! Delighted.... Do you know, it had slipped my mind for the moment?

All go out.

PRINCESS HELENA and the BARONESS VON ROSENBERG
enter.

BARONESS. Whatever happens, I shall not return to the Casino again; responsibility for the future must not rest upon my shoulders. I have had enough of responsibility—yes, and of remorse. I cannot sleep; only by the use of morphine am I able to quiet my nerves, but sleep, innocent sleep, which is the balm of a quiet conscience, has fled from my eyes forever.

PRINCESS HELENA. I hope you do not imagine that I enjoy visiting the Casino. It did amuse me for the first few evenings; it was a novelty. I had never seen anything but those horrible functions at the Court of Suavia. I had been entertained, it is true, at one or two casinos at the deadly seaside resorts of our own country, which become more deadly than ever when a member of the Imperial family is present; but now my curiosity has been satisfied. I shall never return to the Casino again.

BARONESS. Where else is there to go?

PRINCESS HELENA. We shall find some place which is more amusing, or more wicked—which is the same thing. I have always noticed that the places which everybody agrees are wicked, are by far the most amusing. That is the reason I am inclined to believe that hell, which certainly has the worst reputation, must be extremely funny.

BARONESS. Your Highness! I am shocked beyond expression. You have absolutely no idea of what you are talking about, and you have not had for some time.

PRINCESS HELENA. Not since I made up my mind to say what I thought and do what I pleased. Is that what you wish to convey?

BARONESS. Remember what happened to us this evening! A libertine has whispered phrases into my ear, which I had never expected to hear from a man. When he let go my hand, there was a hundred-franc note in it. And he had the impertinence to add: "Fix it up for me with your young friend . . . a few moments of her time." I thought I should expire on the spot.

PRINCESS HELENA. Delicious, was it not? If I had been in your place, I should have accepted the hundred francs and have staked them all on the next deal. I am sure that you would have continued in luck.

BARONESS. Highness! Speech fails me. I shall die of mortification. The world is on tiptoe, waiting to see what you are going to do next. They observe us from Suavia; you may depend upon it, we are watched.

PRINCESS HELENA. For that reason I am unwilling to appear sad or weary for a single moment.

BARONESS. But you are, I can see it, in spite of yourself. Nothing but a quiet conscience——

PRINCESS HELENA. Why harp so much upon conscience?

Mine does not trouble me; it is at peace with all the world. I have no children to prejudice by my behavior, which, after all, is the only consideration which would have made it inexcusable. As for my husband, I have merely repaid him—without great interest—for the insolence and brutality with which he has treated me. I owe the Court of Suavia nothing beyond a life of mortal stagnation which was one continual abdication of my will, a perpetual act of self-suppression. I have struck the balance and settled my account with them all. Now, I am dissatisfied with myself

BARONESS. In what way?

PRINCESS HELENA. It is idle to attempt to change ourselves when we continue in the same environment. The past, not the future, governs the world. History, despised history, tyrannizes over the lives of men as of nations. How different life would be if it were possible for us to be born on the day when we can first truly say that our lives are our own, that we belong to ourselves; but we are not even able to say that we are born on the first day of our lives, we have been living for a long time previously, from remote antiquity, in the days that are far off. Life is a forest many centuries old, and our souls are rooted in it like centenarian trees. The wind rustles the branches, and we imagine that we are spreading our wings about to fly, to soar upward into the air and liberty and light.

BARONESS. All of which is to say——

PRINCESS HELENA. All of which is to say that I should have renounced my old life gladly, but absolutely, altogether. Of what use is it to forget who I am, when nobody is willing to forget it around me? Everybody expects of me the same behavior, and treats me with the same deference as at the Court of Suavia; everybody does, and the worst of all is the very person who of all others has most reason to forget it.

When everybody from the man who loves me, for whom I have renounced my rank, my position, without so much as one regret, down to the humblest servant and the shop-keeper who waits upon me to sell me some trinket, and the beggar who follows me down the street, when everybody insists upon reminding me that I am Princess of Suavia, neither in my actions nor in my appearance nor in my expenditures can I cease to be so. The honors which the government of Suavia denies me officially, the world returns to me privately, for its own advantage. It is utterly useless to say: "I am merely a woman, like any other woman, who is in love, who wishes to be happy, to be forgotten, without being responsible for her conduct to anybody." Immediately the world is up in arms: "No, Your Highness! It is impossible! To us you are always the Princess—Princess Helena of Suavia!" The Emperor assured me that I had forfeited popular respect through my foolishness, but I have never been so much respected, nor treated with so much consideration, nor so be-princessed as now. That is why I could not help being pleased when that *roué* took me for a disreputable woman, and I showed it. For the first time in my life I found out what I really looked like.

BARONESS. Have pity on my poor nerves! I never listened to such conversation. Surely you did not imagine that anybody was going to forget who you are? If we did, you would be the last person to thank us for it. Being treated like a princess is not what you object to; it is the difficulty of making both ends meet while you submit to the process.

PRINCESS HELENA. It may be so. It is impossible to continue as we are doing now.

BARONESS. Although the crisis will be a passing one. The Emperor cannot afford to permit his niece——

PRINCESS HELENA. When it is a question of spending money, the Emperor cannot afford anything.

BARONESS. In that contingency——

PRINCESS HELENA. I have considered several alternatives, but Herr Rosmer disapproves of all of them. They are incorrect, he says—beneath the dignity of a princess.

BARONESS. Undoubtedly, although the impropriety would be merely a matter of form. In the end the Emperor will be obliged to pay. Of that we may be certain.

PRINCESS HELENA. I hope so, to avoid an open scandal. The difficulty is that Albert is opposed to scandals. He believes that the Emperor will consent to my divorce, and then we shall be able to return to Suavia and live like princes.

BARONESS. I doubt it. The Emperor will never consent that a princess of Imperial blood should suffer divorce.

PRINCESS HELENA. And he is perfectly right. All divorce is ridiculous. Besides, it destroys the only certainty which there is to marriage—the certainty that you will never be able to do it again. I no longer give divorce a second thought; it leads nowhere. Suppose I were to marry Herr Rosmer now after all this talk? It would be too much like the table of errata at the end of a book, when you have read the book. It corrects nothing and recalls everything.

CHANTEL enters.

BARONESS. Do you see? That fellow again. Move on. He is capable——

PRINCESS HELENA. Let us find out of what he is capable. Whatever it is, it will not shock me.

CHANTEL. Baroness von—von.... Pardon if the title escapes my mind.

BARONESS. Von Rosenberg.

CHANTEL. In my confusion, consequent upon my regrettable mistake, I neglected to offer my apologies as a gentleman, to beg pardon of the Baroness and of Her Highness——

BARONESS. Duchess, if you please. Her Highness is travelling incognito.

CHANTEL. Pardon. Her Highness will always be Her Highness to me.

PRINCESS HELENA. And to everybody else. It makes no matter.

CHANTEL. I might say in my defense that I approached Your Highness only at the suggestion of the Comte de Tournerelles, as his private secretary. The Comte is somewhat near-sighted. He supposed——

PRINCESS HELENA. Quite naturally. In this cosmopolis where everybody pretends to be what they are not, it is not surprising that a princess should be taken for a *cocotte* where there are so many *cocottes* who are taken for princesses.

BARONESS. Did you say the Comte de Tournerelles? Not that Comte who enjoys the reputation for spending money? Why, they call him— I beg your pardon; I forgot that you were his secretary.

CHANTEL. Not at all; it is no secret. In Paris they dub him the “Little Chocolateer,” as the origin of his fortune was in chocolate. His grandfather arrived in Paris without a *sou* to his name, and established a small factory.

PRINCESS HELENA. Needless to add that he came bare-foot; it is the legend of all great fortunes.

CHANTEL. However, after living in Paris twenty years conducting a modest factory, he branched out suddenly into other lines, bought land, and commenced to build houses.

BARONESS. All of them dispensing chocolate?

CHANTEL. Or with it, as the case might be. To-day his grandson is a multimillionaire, and a Comte. He has attracted more attention in Paris, such as it is, over a longer period of years, than any other person still living, except Sarah Bernhardt and Otero. He sets the fashions.

PRINCESS HELENA. Including those in Parisian beauties, according to my information. Was not the celebrated Diana de Lys a creation of his?

CHANTEL. Are you referring to the Comtesse Diana de Lys?

PRINCESS HELENA. Ah! So he has also made her Comtesse?

CHANTEL. She is an extraordinarily intelligent woman, who dominates the Comte by her ability. She is able to do with him whatever she wants, even to the point of marriage, which is exactly what she wants.

PRINCESS HELENA. Do you know, this gossip interests me? These people fight, they live——

CHANTEL. They do; and you will find plenty of them here. No doubt Your Highness's life has been rather retired, as unquestionably is better suited to the tastes of Your Highness; it facilitates without attracting attention. Did you ever hear of the Wilf and Wulf Concerts Company?

PRINCESS HELENA. What was the name of the company?

CHANTEL. A most ingenious device for preparing the ground so that one may meet everybody, whatever one may have in mind, all the while apparently in the exclusive pursuit of art—that is to say, Wilf's music. An immense theatre is to be erected—nothing else is mentioned in public. Perhaps Your Highness would be interested to attend a little concert at the Comte's villa? The Comte would deem it a great honor if you would accept his invitation.

PRINCESS HELENA. I should be charmed. You said, did you not, that the company would be rather mixed?

BARONESS. Highness!

CHANTEL. Oh! The guests will all be distinguished people. His Highness, Prince Stephen, has promised to be present.

PRINCESS HELENA. I am so sorry! I am not on the best of terms with my cousin; I find him entirely too serious.

BARONESS. Your Highness! You cannot appear at a function at which Prince Stephen is present. You would be obliged to meet his wife, la Königsberg, a comic-opera singer.

PRINCESS HELENA. Of course, in my position I am obliged to be particular. Baroness, you amuse me.

BARONESS. Highness, I am deeply grieved; I must positively give you up. You play havoc with my most cherished convictions.

PRINCESS HELENA. Nonsense! We left our convictions behind us when we left Suavia. Tell the Comte that I shall be delighted to accept his invitation and to attend his concert.

BARONESS. Oh!

CHANTEL. The Comte will be greatly pleased. I bow, Your Highness.... Baroness, a word. A moment with you alone....

BARONESS. Sir! Do you intend to offer me another hundred-franc note?

CHANTEL. No, it is something worth your while this time.

BARONESS. Sir!

CHANTEL. Don't be nervous. I am told that Her Highness is negotiating a loan. She has encountered difficulties, as the sum is considerable.

PRINCESS HELENA. Oh, Baroness!

BARONESS. Just a minute. How interesting!.... So you know, then?

CHANTEL. The Comte will be glad to oblige Her Highness and to assist the negotiations by any means in his power.

BARONESS. No, no! Impossible! I did not know that the Comte was in this business.

CHANTEL. It is not business. Her Highness's name will be sufficient guarantee. You may say so on behalf of the Comte. I await Her Highness's reply.

CHANTEL *retires*.

PRINCESS HELENA. What was your secret with the secretary?

BARONESS. Most remarkable! I scarcely know what to say. Would you believe it? He asked me to offer you in the name of the Comte whatever you require without any other guarantee than your reputation, which to him is sufficient.

PRINCESS HELENA. Not really? We are saved!

BARONESS. Highness! I am amazed. Money offered in this spirit, by a person whom you have not even met—

PRINCESS HELENA. By a person who knows perfectly well that sooner or later he will have to be repaid. He has sufficient sense and business acumen to realize that his apparent confidence and disinterestedness only place me still more deeply in his debt.

BARONESS. Very possibly he has. One must be upon one's guard with these parvenus. How can we tell but that what he really wishes is to compromise your reputation, so as to capitalize it afterward in some discreditable enterprise?

PRINCESS HELENA. Quite unlikely. My personal influence is no longer of account, and I am scarcely in a position to betray political or financial secrets. I believe that the Comte is merely anxious to pay handsomely for the luxury of presenting another Highness in his house, at his entertainments, where the tone of society is somewhat mixed. My cousin is certainly not on friendly terms with the Comte for nothing. Prince Stephen's condition must be far worse than mine by this time. He is the person to advise us. . . .

BARONESS. The adventure is perilous. This Comte, this Comtesse, that secretary, these musicians, especially now

that they are associated with Prince Stephen, and that means, of course, his wife. . . . When all is said and done, the Court of Suavia will overlook your separation from your husband far more readily than it will condone the indecent marriage of Prince Stephen.

PRINCESS HELENA. That in itself is sufficient commentary upon the moral status of the Court of Suavia. We have arrived at an *impasse* at which we cannot afford to be particular. When one rises every day to see the sun shining upon an income which is adequate to one's needs and social position, it is all very well to be fastidious in the choice of one's friends, but morality is like army discipline: it is very different in peace from what it is in time of war. I am fighting now to make my own way in the world. I have only myself to rely upon, and I fight at a disadvantage. Ah! It is easy to rise, to force oneself up from the depths through sheer power of will, through one's unaided efforts, like this Comtesse of whom we have just heard from the secretary. She had no one but herself to consider, there was nothing to stop her. All she had to do was to say to herself, "I want this," and she had it. But to drop down from above, to hide oneself, to disappear, if such a thing were possible, so as to live a new life more personal, more one's own, that is difficult, because it is to the interest of all with whom we come in contact not to permit us to come down, since their social position is dependent upon ours, and they live by our lives, which for that reason were never ours, and it is to their interest to rise. However, you deceive yourself if you imagine that I shall allow myself to be restrained by any such ridiculous scruples.

BARONESS. I do not imagine that they will interfere with you in the least. What a place this world would be if other people were to behave as you do! It would become an orgy

of wild beasts. If there is no limit to selfishless merely because we wish to be happy——

PRINCESS HELENA. But there is a limit to happiness—it is the pain which we give to others.

BARONESS. And do you mean to say that you have not long since passed that limit? Consider how Their Majesties feel! How does your husband feel? Think of me!

PRINCESS HELENA. Absurd! You do not call that unhappiness? It is not my idea of pain. What I have offended is merely vanity, their pride, prejudices of rank, Court etiquette. No human being has shed one real tear because of me. Anger, not sorrow, is the emotion which they feel. One single tear in the eyes of those who love us deserves the sacrifice of all the happiness in the world, but the shrieks and yells of this childish rage, which is neither sorrow, nor love, nor even genuine rage, are not worth the sacrifice of one passing caprice, much less of the happiness which might have been ours in the world.

PRINCE STEPHEN *and the* COMTE DE TOURNERELLES
enter.

PRINCE STEPHEN. If I borrowed of the bank, my friend, it was because the sum was utterly insignificant. I have been playing in abominable luck this evening—although I had a presentiment that my luck was about to change.

COMTE. I forgive you upon the understanding that this evening is to be an exception. Any reflection upon my friendship, I could never forgive.

PRINCE STEPHEN. My dear Comte, I await a fitting opportunity of demonstrating my appreciation of your generosity and esteem fully.

COMTE. Will you be so kind as to present me to your cousin, the Princess Helena? I owe her an explanation and an apology.

PRINCE STEPHEN. With pleasure—or, rather, I should do so were I certain of my own reception. My relations with Princess Helena have never been overcordial, as perhaps you know. Under different circumstances, through a coincidence, we encountered opposition at Court at the same time. It seems that the accident aggravated the condition of the Emperor, so that if we were not sympathetic before, our antipathy has since increased rapidly.

COMTE. I beg your pardon; I had no idea....

PRINCESS HELENA. [*To the BARONESS*] Discussion is useless. My mind is made up. Do as I tell you.

BARONESS. Oh, for the heroic soul of my ancestors and the courage to oppose your wishes! Think—think again, for the last time!

PRINCESS HELENA. Otherwise I shall speak to him myself.

BARONESS. No! Never that! Wait.... [*To the PRINCE*] Highness!

PRINCE STEPHEN. Eh? Ah, yes! My dear Baroness! I am delighted—delighted and surprised. In fact, I scarcely expected—certainly not before the Princess....

BARONESS. It was Her Highness who insisted upon my speaking to you.

PRINCE STEPHEN. She did? It seems incredible.—If you do not mind.... one moment, my dear Comte.

COMTE. I retire in Her Highness's favor. Apparently she wishes a word with you.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Yes, wait outside. The introduction will be possible very shortly. [*The COMTE retires*] Did you say it was she?.... I thought she avoided me.

BARONESS. She had the same impression of Your Highness.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Of me? How could she? On the contrary.... My dear cousin!

PRINCESS HELENA. Why, cousin! Really have you no grudge against me?

PRINCE STEPHEN. I thought you were avoiding me.

PRINCESS HELENA. A stupid misunderstanding has existed between us. Now we are united by misfortune. We have both been banished for the same offense—for having dared to declare the independence of our hearts.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Although mine was already free.

PRINCESS HELENA. Is that a reproach? Mine was bound to a tyrant whom another tyrant had imposed. I consider myself much more heroic than you. You are a Prince and I a Princess, but you had the advantage of being a single man. I had three tyrannies to overcome—my rank as Princess, marriage, and the disability of being a woman. I do not need to tell you what a valiant spirit I had in me.

PRINCE STEPHEN. No, indeed. Your marriage was a mistake, an inexplicable caprice of the Emperor's. You must have suffered tortures. But you are happy now, as I am.

PRINCESS HELENA. Yes, very happy—as happy as you are. This is life at last, it is liberty, love, and they are well worth all the sacrifices which we have made to enjoy them. For my part, I regard them as negligible, absolutely negligible.

PRINCE STEPHEN. So do I, I assure you; although it seems hardly fair to ask those whom we love to endure these privations with us.

PRINCESS HELENA. We cannot call ourselves rich. We expect nothing from the Emperor—in fact, I expect less than you do. My debts are already heavy, and my credit is becoming exhausted.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Do not tell me.

PRINCESS HELENA. It occurred to me, perhaps, that the Comte de Tournernelles. . . . Is he a close friend of yours?

PRINCE STEPHEN. Of course; although I should scarcely

presume to accept favors of such a nature, in spite of his repeated offers.

PRINCESS HELENA. Then you are making a great mistake; everybody is convinced that you do. Nobody puts any other interpretation upon your intimacy.

PRINCE STEPHEN. The explanation is very simple. I should be intolerably selfish if I were to attempt to isolate poor Elsa altogether, yet what society is open to us now? In this democracy of money and vice, which are the two great democratizers, the only possible selection lies among those whose money and vices are relieved by some touch of imagination, some suggestion of art. The Comte is one of these. Besides, he is a thoroughly fine fellow, large-hearted, incapable by nature of the slightest indelicacy.

PRINCESS HELENA. Then you believe that he is a person who can be relied upon thoroughly?

PRINCE STEPHEN. Beyond question.

PRINCESS HELENA. Naturally you are in a position to know. The Comte is anxious to meet me. I trust that you will accommodate him at the very first opportunity.

PRINCE STEPHEN. At once. It will be a great pleasure to him. He tells me that he owes you an explanation.

PRINCESS HELENA. It is wholly unnecessary. I shall be enchanted to meet him.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Perhaps he is not far away.

[PRINCE STEPHEN *goes out*.]

BARONESS. Your Highness! Your Highness! We totter upon the verge of a precipice; I feel very much as I should if I were to discover you looping the loop. My reason will be unable to support these terrible blows. Who is this? Herr Rosmer. . . . Another calamity! He could not have appeared at a worse time. When he learns that you have spoken to your cousin, that he has promised to present the Comte de Tournerelles——

PRINCESS HELENA. He will be shocked, which is the best thing that he does. Let me know when my cousin arrives with the Comte.

The BARONESS retires. HERR ALBERT ROSMER enters.

PRINCESS HELENA. Oh, Albert! Where have you been? You have played and lost! Will you never learn that a man cannot be lucky at everything? Well, what are you going to do? Smile, or wait for your luck to change to look pleasant?

ALBERT. I have not been playing to-night. I should never play, if I had my way, nor should we come to the Casino. We should not remain another day in this place.

PRINCESS HELENA. Yes, I know your love-idyl: our hearts and a cabin. Unhappy the woman who is lured into that dream! I still remember the week we spent in the country together, without seeing a soul, without another person to speak to, alone with our immense love. Who tired of it first?

ALBERT. It irritated me to see how bored you were.

PRINCESS HELENA. And I suppose it bored me to see you having such a good time? What is the use of this pretense? We were both bored horribly. Love is a beautiful thing, no doubt it is the most beautiful thing in the world, but it is like the sun—beautiful because it shines on so much that is lovely and beautiful, which appears more fascinating in its light; the light itself is not beautiful. I hope and pray that our love may always be surrounded by all the lovely and beautiful things in the world.

ALBERT. Yes, I seem to have noticed it. What you want is to be happy, eternally happy. Your idea of love is having nothing serious to think about.

PRINCESS HELENA. If I had thought seriously enough to satisfy your ideas, we should never have loved each other, nor should we be living together now. I adore happiness above everything else in the world; I have no intention of saddening my life by resignation, nor of renouncing your

love, nor of doing penance, either, because I am yours and I love you so. Was it my duty to sit still and submit to having my life regulated by an Emperor and a Court which represent nothing but tradition and antiquity, in which the voices of the dead have more influence than the wishes of the living? No, I had a heart, I had a soul, I had my life to live, which was not that life, and it was my duty to fight, to rebel. Life is either accepting the conditions and environment in which we find ourselves, without protest, without rebellion, and living on peacefully and quietly, resigned to our fate, as if we were already dead—and in that case it is just as well to have all the virtues about us like statues on a monument—or otherwise it is protest, it is struggle, rebellion against the world, and there is but one virtue in a rebel, which is courage; the others, no matter how impressive their names, are nothing but ghosts of cowardice and fear—which are all that prevent us from running to meet happiness with a light heart, when happiness calls to us in our lives in the name of love.

ALBERT. Suppose happiness calls to you some day in your life in the name of love, and the voice is not my voice? You would not hesitate, of course?

PRINCESS HELENA. Why do you say that? You have no reason to doubt my love.

ALBERT. Probably I have no reason to doubt it because you fancy that you have sacrificed so much for my sake.

PRINCESS HELENA. It was no sacrifice for me to give up a life which I loathed and despised.

ALBERT. If it was no sacrifice, and you loathed and despised it so utterly, how am I to know but that the desire to escape from it may not have influenced you more than my love? Without your being conscious of it, I may have represented this new life in your eyes, a fresh environment, and

this liberty upon which you plume yourself, forgetting who you are and the respect which you owe to your rank as Princess.

PRINCESS HELENA. Oh! What is the use of talking? Now you are finding fault with me; it has become a habit. I might very well doubt your love, since you should have warned me before that I was forgetting who I was and what I owed to myself as Princess, and not now when it is too late, if all that you saw in me was Princess Helena of Suavia.

ALBERT. You have no right to say such things; you misjudge me. What I wish is to see you respected, to feel that your conduct is becoming your rank and position. I am not willing to have people think that a craving for low, promiscuous adventure threw us together, when it was love. Besides, I am afraid that you will be disillusioned yourself when you are brought face to face with the very matter-of-fact hardships to which we shall presently be exposed, which will appear intolerable to you. I do not wish you to have stooped so low when that time comes, that it will be impossible to recover the position which you renounced for love of me, as I hope and believe—for love of me entirely. Yes, is it not true, my Princess Bébé, born into a world into which of all others you should never have been born, to become the terror of the Court of Suavia, like a great, unruly boy in the midst of a den of musty antiquaries, who laughs at them and rifles their hoary parchments and diplomas, and overturns their ancient cabinets which are covered with dust?

PRINCESS HELENA. Yes, it is so lovely to rebel! It was in heaven, next to God. There was a rebel angel, even there, who for mere love of it, exchanged heaven for hell.

ALBERT. Exactly, for hell. Now you have said it. Perhaps you will be mourning your lost paradise some day.

PRINCESS HELENA. It will only be because I have not found what I sought. Through whose fault, I wonder? But I shall not turn back, I promise you, come what will!

ALBERT. Then you will love me forever?

PRINCESS HELENA. If your love is the love I have hoped to find in the world.

ALBERT. What do you mean?

PRINCESS HELENA. I have already told you that I shall never turn back.

ALBERT. Do you realize our situation? Look at these letters.

PRINCESS HELENA. Bills of course, creditors, the bankers close their vaults, a few lines of friendly advice. . . . I knew it, I expected it.

ALBERT. Hitherto you have merely renounced the disadvantages of your rank. Will you be equal also to renouncing its advantages?

PRINCESS HELENA. No, I shall renounce nothing. I shall fight for our love. We need money and I intend to get it. My cousin, Prince Stephen, has promised to present the Comte de Tournerelles.

ALBERT. Have you been talking with your cousin? Will you permit him to present the Comte de Tournerelles? Do you realize what that implies socially? You will be obliged to recognize the Prince's wife and the Comte's mistress, yes, and their whole circle of fortune-hunters and adventurers. No, no, it is out of the question. We are observed from the Court of Suavia. If our conduct is correct as befits our station, the Emperor may relent, but if we receive these people—

PRINCESS HELENA. Why not acknowledge at once that all your hopes are based upon the Emperor's consent to my divorce, so that I shall again become Princess of Suavia, and then you will be Prince Consort at my side? Is that it?

Do you flatter yourself that any amount of good behavior, or the enduring of a thousand privations, will gain us the favor of the Emperor? How silly! No, there is only one course to pursue: the Emperor will never yield except before a scandal, or when the outcry of my creditors threatens to make him ridiculous.

ALBERT. Are you serious about accepting money from the Comte de Tournernelles? Do you realize what that involves? Are you crazy? Do you know to what you will be committing yourself, what he will undoubtedly think, what he will have the impudence to expect of you?

PRINCESS HELENA. Nothing of the sort! He neither thinks nor expects anything. He merely believes that he is coming off very cheaply, entertaining a Princess in his house at a clever bargain.

ALBERT. Have you considered the persons you will be obliged to meet in his house?

PRINCESS HELENA. Yes, I have; I can imagine who they will be. Men and women with passions, with vices, with interests and necessities, with flesh and blood and nerves—people who live, who struggle and fight for their lives, who love, hate, intrigue; people who are like everybody else, just the same as you and I. Why this insane desire to shut ourselves off from each other, to ticket and classify ourselves, to create distinctions between us, and fancy that we are superior to our fellows, when we are all equal and all belong to the same race, the poor, despised human race, which spends all its time dividing itself and hating itself and marking itself off into classes and castes and individuals, when all the sympathy and all the love in our hearts which might bind us together would be too little even then among so many to alleviate the sorrows of life?

The BARONESS enters.

BARONESS. Oh, Your Highness! . . . His Highness and

the Comte! . . . Herr Rosmer, has she told you? Have you influence to prevent it? I have letters from Suavia this very day; they know, they exaggerate. They hear that we are leading lives of degradation and shame, abandoned to play—a perpetual orgy of depravity. Would you believe it? They even say that I have a lover! Only a supreme effort sustains my shattered nerves.

ALBERT. Further struggle is useless. Her Highness will never be influenced by any suggestion which may be tainted with sense.

PRINCE STEPHEN, *the COMTE, ELSA, and DIANA enter.*

PRINCE STEPHEN. Cousin, may I present the Comte de Tournernelles?

[The COMTE advances.]

COMTE. Highness! I owe you an apology for a most regrettable mistake.

ELSA. Stephen! *[Stopping short, astonished. Then to DIANA]* Princess Helena? Impossible! Only yesterday he swore that he would never speak to her again. This will reach the ears of the Emperor.

PRINCESS HELENA. I should like you to meet Herr Albert Rosmer—if you have no objection?

PRINCE STEPHEN. To what? In fact, we have met before. I remember him very well.

PRINCESS HELENA. Albert, Prince Stephen wishes to speak with you.

ALBERT. Highness!

PRINCE STEPHEN. I have frequently had the pleasure in Suavia.

PRINCESS HELENA. Now present me to your wife. Do you hesitate? You have scruples—

PRINCE STEPHEN. No, indeed, I assure you.

PRINCESS HELENA. Oh, then she is the one who has scruples? Is she as jealous of her dignity and importance as

Herr Rosmer? How amusing! We renounce our rank because of them, and then they oblige us with an imitation of it.

PRINCE STEPHEN. It is amusing—very. Elsa. . . .

ELSA. What are you doing with Princess Helena? I hope you do not expect me to speak to her

ALBERT. [*To HELENA*] Why did you force me to recognize the Prince?

PRINCE STEPHEN. How perfectly absurd! She is my cousin; besides, we are travelling.

ELSA. She is with her paramour. A married woman!

ALBERT. I should not have objected if he had been alone, but his wife is with him. A comic-opera singer!

PRINCESS HELENA. Oh, this is too much! What foolishness! I shall put an end to this nonsense at once. Comte, will you present me to. . . . ah, yes! to your *fiancée*, the Comtesse Diana de Lys?

COMTE. Ah! Delighted! Diana——

DIANA. Highness! This is a great honor. It is a tremendous satisfaction to me.

ALBERT. What are we coming to, Baroness?

BARONESS. Bromides have lost their effect. I shall be obliged to get drunk or take morphine—which is a polite method of getting drunk.

PRINCESS HELENA. I am anticipating your concert with great pleasure.

DIANA. Are you really coming? Oh, Highness! It is so good of you!

COMTE. The honor will be unprecedented for us both.

PRINCESS HELENA. Do present me to my cousin's wife, if you will be so kind. Apparently he is afraid. They are disputing warmly.

COMTE. Oh, no! You must be mistaken, I am sure. My dear, Princess Helena desires to meet you.

PRINCE STEPHEN. What did I tell you? I could not help myself.

ELSA. Highness!

PRINCESS HELENA. Don't call me Highness; my name is Helena. Why did you object to meeting me?

ELSA. I? Who told you so?

PRINCESS HELENA. Oh, I did not mind! We are going to become very fond of each other.

ELSA. Possibly. Pardon, I was speaking with the Comtesse

PRINCESS HELENA. Stephen, look at Herr Rosmer and your wife. They are disgusted; it mortifies them to see us such good friends. They are afraid that we may forget ourselves and commit some blunder, or fail in etiquette.

PRINCE STEPHEN. I believe you are right.

PRINCESS HELENA. They deserve—well, they do deserve it.

PRINCE STEPHEN. What?

PRINCESS HELENA. Nothing! Was it worth while to defy the world and to revolutionize our hearts just for this? They deserve to have us remember who we are, since they are not able to forget it.

Curtain

**CHARACTERS APPEARING IN THE
THIRD ACT**

PRINCE STEPHEN
PRINCESS HELENA
COMTESSE DIANA DE LYS
ELSA KÖNIGSBERG
THE BARONESS VON ROSENBERG
COMTE DE TOURNERELLES
HERR ALBERT ROSMER
M. DE CHANTEL
CONDUCTOR WULF
MME. CLEMENCIA WILF
GOTTFRIED WILF
THE DUCHESSA D'ARCOLE

Guests and Attendants

THE THIRD ACT

Foyer in the villa of the COMTE DE TOURNERELLES.

PRINCESS HELENA and the **COMTE DE TOURNERELLES** in conversation.

COMTE. To be perfectly frank, my dear—I beg your pardon, Your Highness. . . .

PRINCESS HELENA. I prefer the status of a friend.

COMTE. The familiarity will not surprise you. You are one of the women whom a man feels he has known all his life, when he speaks to her for the first time. I am neither innocent nor confiding, as you may judge, yet I feel that I have not a secret in the world which I could keep from you. You are a benevolent fairy, enlivening what you touch; it is a gift. I have never known until this moment what it is to be alive.

PRINCESS HELENA. Until this moment? Then I fear that at this moment you are about to become a sadly disappointed man.

COMTE. How so?

PRINCESS HELENA. Because you will find that ignorance is a prerequisite to enjoyment. However, that was probably not what you were going to say.

COMTE. No, I forget. . . . Ah, yes! I remember. It was a roundabout way of telling you something else.

PRINCESS HELENA. Let us begin with the roundabout way.

COMTE. Before we became so intimate, when as yet I admired you at a distance, I imagined Herr Rosmer to be—how shall I express it so as not to give offense?

PRINCESS HELENA. An ideal creature, a Knight of the Swan, a legendary hero. Now you feel that he is a very ordinary person, like everybody else. Naturally, you have no means of comparison; you did not know my husband.

COMTE. You are adorable!

PRINCESS HELENA. But speaking of the gentleman was only a roundabout way.

COMTE. Of telling you that I love you!

PRINCESS HELENA. Doubtless you may be justified in fancying yourself a Lohengrin, since you have rescued me from an embarrassing predicament. However, if I were in your place, I think I should delay my declaration of love just a little.

COMTE. Why delay?

PRINCESS HELENA. Because there is no probability of your being pleased with the answer. If favorable, you will consider it gratitude; if unfavorable, the reverse.

COMTE. All I ask is that it be sincere.

PRINCESS HELENA. Sincere? When your entire conversation is a tissue of stock gallantries, which apparently you consider obligatory, although in my case they are somewhat bold.

COMTE. Bold? Is that intended as a rebuke?

PRINCESS HELENA. On the contrary, it is intended as friendly advice. One accepts anything from a friend.

COMTE. Why not accept it from a lover? Love is stronger than friendship. However, your theory interests me.

PRINCESS HELENA. No, not from a lover whose love cannot be returned. It is so easy to satisfy a friend.

COMTE. Unless only love can satisfy a friend.

PRINCESS HELENA. If you flatter yourself that my love is to become the guarantor of my friendship, you may as well understand at once that my heart is insolvent, and you are at

liberty to accept my insolvency in every sense of the word, my dear friend.

The BARONESS enters.

BARONESS. Highness! . . .

PRINCESS HELENA. Is the concert over? Is the audience asleep, or is it still yawning in ecstasy?

BARONESS. Your disappearance has occasioned most unfavorable comment.

PRINCESS HELENA. Wilf's music is depressing; it recalls so much. In leaving, I fancied that I was paying a sincere tribute to its value.

BARONESS. The Comte was obliged to follow in your footsteps.

PRINCESS HELENA. Far from it. The Comte had already made good his retreat.

BARONESS. The entire audience noticed your disappearance, as it were, in concert. You should have heard what they said!

PRINCESS HELENA. How foolish of them to say it before you! They might have known that you would have been sure to repeat it.

BARONESS. Your Highness, they supposed I was asleep.

PRINCESS HELENA. Probably you were, and you dreamed it. Certainly the music was propitious.

BARONESS. It is useless to argue. After this, silence is golden in my sight. No matter what I may hear, I shall remain silent—silent as the moral sense of Your Highness.

PRINCESS HELENA. Comte, the Baroness has promised us. Return to the concert and set these idle rumors at rest.

COMTE. Shall we return together? It is nearly over. We shall be in time for the applause.

PRINCESS HELENA. The coincidence would be too striking.

No, leave me here; I must recuperate, gazing up into the heavens on this beautiful night, which is all tenderness.

COMTE. Under no circumstances expose yourself upon the balcony. The night is cold....

PRINCESS HELENA. Perhaps, for these lands where the orange-flower blooms, as Mignon sings, but to me it seems a beautiful midsummer evening, after the icy drafts of the Kingdom of Suavia.— Why! I hear music.... It cannot be the concert; it floats in from outside, from a distance. It is a waltz, a delicious waltz!

COMTE. One of those gypsy orchestras which infest the neighborhood. There is an all-night restaurant near by, just at the rear of the villa, a resort of the most villainous character. Carnival is coming on, so masked balls are in season. I assure you that they are interesting, in fact unique. One meets the entire Almanac de Gotha of crime at them.

BARONESS. Is it possible? You alarm me.

PRINCESS HELENA. Do you think that perhaps we might arrange to be present?

BARONESS. Highness! I am shocked.... The idea occurred to you upon the spur of the moment, as the Comte spoke.

COMTE. I advise against it. If one goes alone, it is dangerous; if the police are along, the thing loses its attraction. The dance does not seem the same.

PRINCESS HELENA. Silence!

COMTE. Do you hear anything?

PRINCESS HELENA. Don't you see?

COMTE. Yes, in the garden.... My secretary, Chantel.

PRINCESS HELENA. But who is she? Who is she? One of the guests?

COMTE. I think not. No.... I cannot make out from here.

PRINCESS HELENA. Baroness, your lorgnettes. . . . One of the maids. Amusing, is it not? Ha, ha! Did you hear that?

COMTE. Yes, a kiss. There can be no doubt of it.

BARONESS. A kiss? Your Highness, retire!

PRINCESS HELENA. Enough. . . . Your secretary is the only person who is enjoying himself this evening. It is the same everywhere, in society as in life. The official entertainment is staged in the drawing-room, where the boredom is polite; the real entertainment goes on behind the scenes.

COMTE. Why exchange it for the public view? Permit me to remain at your side; my happiness is complete. I shall not speak to you, but together we shall gaze into the sky, we shall listen to the mingling of music and kisses, while our souls blend in the dark silences and become mute as the tears well up in our eyes in a transport of love so tremendous that it unites in its tremor the fulness of life and the fleeting premonition of death.

PRINCESS HELENA. Poetic, is it not? Why, there are tears in your eyes! Are you much affected?

COMTE. Do you doubt it?

PRINCESS HELENA. No, no. Let us withdraw from the balcony and return to the concert. You alarm me.

COMTE. I do? In what way?

PRINCESS HELENA. I feel that I am becoming affected myself, without knowing why. I could easily cry, yet I could not tell you the reason. I am unwilling that my life should be influenced by this night of faultless blue and the thrum of music afar off, or determined by a few idle words, which, if I had heard them in broad daylight, in the midst of company, I should have laughed at—as I laugh at them now.

COMTE. Your Highness! Helena! [*He kisses her hand.*]

BARONESS. Sir!

PRINCESS HELENA. Don't be alarmed, Baroness. The

Comte is a gentleman; he kisses my hand—as Princess of Suavia. The Comte is one of my very warm friends.

M. DE CHANTEL *enters*.

PRINCESS HELENA. Ah, M. de Chantel! Is the concert over? Have you come from the hall?

CHANTEL. Yes, from the hall—from that direction. Although I believe there is more to come. . . .

PRINCESS HELENA. Your enthusiasm carries you away. What divine music! I am impatient to hear your opinion, M. de Chantel.

CHANTEL. My opinion? I should prefer to hear that of Your Highness first. Upon finding you here, my impression was that you were as thoroughly bored as the Comte.

PRINCESS HELENA. Bored? Never! I was highly enthusiastic; in fact, I was nervous. What wonderful music!

CHANTEL. Sublime! It is really.

PRINCESS HELENA. And so ineffably suggestive. One experiences the most extraordinary sensations as one listens. For a moment I was transported into the moonlight, into the bosom of a beautiful garden, heavy with the scent of violets; the music sank to a rippling murmur of lovers' kisses who, as it seemed, were strolling in pairs through the garden, in embraces so tight that their bodies cast but a single shadow upon the ground, symbolic at that instant of the fusion of their souls.

CHANTEL. Yes, indeed! The music is extraordinarily suggestive.

COMTE. [*Aside to CHANTEL*] The Princess is enjoying herself at your expense. Be careful! She knows all.

CHANTEL. All?

COMTE. All that we could see from here.

CHANTEL. Oh! Your Highness. . . .

PRINCESS HELENA. I congratulate you, M. de Chantel. A

dark garden is infinitely preferable to a lighted salon, and a pretty chambermaid to a respectable lady, who is more cautious. As for myself, I prefer kisses to all the music in the world, although I restrain my impulses so not to shock the Baroness. Only vulgar persons take their art at second hand, manufactured for them by professionals, whose heart is not in it. Superior spirits live their art—they wish it free. Yours is a superior spirit, M. de Chantel, and you deserve credit; I congratulate you with all my heart. Comte, shall we return to the concert?—although classic music will seem rather cold after this natural music, which has drifted in at the window.

COMTE. I shall not be cold while I am with you in any case. Life with you is all art and all loveliness.

PRINCESS HELENA. Life with me is all happiness. Come, let us return to the concert.

[PRINCESS HELENA and the COMTE go out.]

BARONESS. M. de Chantel, I appeal to your sympathy. Was ever woman in a more humiliating position?

CHANTEL. Oh, my dear Baroness! I am not a courtier; I was not brought up among princes and noblemen. I am low-born; I have seen everything, I have endured everything. I have been hungry, not only myself, but my mother has been hungry, my sisters and brothers, all those who were near and dear to me. You do not know what that means, my dear Baroness, and I hope you may never know. Of humiliations, of the times I have been obliged to be false to my conscience, to my innermost beliefs, I say nothing. And apart from what I have suffered, I have seen a great deal. Misery and degradation have no secrets from me. I have seen factories and workshops and mines where human beings are herded together like beasts to earn their deaths, for it would be irony to pretend that they were earning a liv-

ing; I have seen jails constructed to imprison those who are so wanting in resignation that they rise, rather than submit to the blind injustice and cruelty of their fate; I have seen asylums and hospitals which gather up those who fall by the wayside, who do resign themselves, and believe me there is small charity in them, and no mercy. I have seen—well, a great many other things, the very existence of which you cannot even imagine at the Court of Suavia. I have seen these things, I know these things, by experience, as a man. So you will not be surprised if I reserve all my sympathy for persons whose situations are somewhat more distressing than yours, which you might very well alleviate if you cared to do so, having everything that you wish in this world, besides looking forward, no doubt, to a glorious reward in the next. Excuse me, my dear Baroness.

BARONESS. Are you laughing at me? The world is out of joint. I scent dissolution in the air!

CHANTEL. A little more dissolution, my dear Baroness, and we may be able to breathe. The atmosphere is surcharged already.

DIANA DE LYS *and the* DUCHESSA D'ARCOLE *enter*.

DIANA. I left the room so as to avoid a scene; the exhibition has become a public scandal.

DUCHESSA. He has not allowed her one moment to herself during the entire evening.

DIANA. The unpleasant part of it is that everybody is sorry for me. If the Comte were my husband, I should not mind; then I could afford to be independent. But now all my friends think that the Princess is forestalling my wedding. I am not easy about it myself. You know how vain men are; a princess is not to be had every day. I understand that she has accepted money from the Comte.

DUCHESSA. Plenty of it, you may be certain.

DIANA. That is what I intend to find out. Call Chantel; get rid of the Baroness in any way you can.

DUCHESSA. Chantel, the Comtesse wishes to see you. Pardon, Baroness. . . .

BARONESS. I beg your pardon.

DUCHESSA. You did not remain to the concert?

BARONESS. No, Her Highness was taken ill, and I was obliged to leave the room with her.

DUCHESSA. With her and the Comte. We saw you go.

BARONESS. The Comte has been most sympathetic.

DUCHESSA. The Comtesse has been most displeased.

BARONESS. Ah! The Comtesse? I was not aware that the Comte was married.

DUCHESSA. He expects to marry shortly. The Princess has been flirting scandalously with the Comte all evening, and the Comtesse——

BARONESS. Is she the Comtesse who was a ballet-dancer? In fact, I am not sure what she was; I am not familiar with the details. In a place like this one is continually treading upon thin ice. I hear persons addressed as Duchess, Countess—when I am positive that there never were any such titles, and I have the entire almanac of European nobility by heart. There is a Duchessa d'Arcole here, for example, not to pursue the matter further——

DUCHESSA. A title dating from the First Empire, one of the most illustrious of France.

BARONESS. It is not in my books. When it comes to that, in questions of nobility, the First Empire does not exist. It was a blot on the page of Europe.

DUCHESSA. Why, Baroness! The first Duc d'Arcole was my great-grandfather. I would not exchange my title for a library of yours.

BARONESS. I regret my indiscretion, and even more that

I am so placed that it is impossible not to commit one at every step. Good evening, Madame. [*Goes out.*]

DUCHESSA. Yes, hold your head high! You may be nobler than I am, but, after all, we both fill about the same void in the world.

DIANA. What is the matter?

DUCHESSA. Nothing. That old Baroness! I wish I could have had the last word. What does Chantel say?

DIANA. He confirms it. The Princess has obtained a loan from the Comte, absolutely without security.

CHANTEL. Beyond what there is in her name.

DIANA. And her reputation. We might as well face it. In spite of all this pretense of boredom and superiority, the Comte is snob enough and sufficiently vain to ruin himself on account of this Princess, a thing which I can never consent to, after having sacrificed myself all these years to his whims and a life of flat monotony.

DUCHESSA. It would be irritating to say the least, especially if he does not marry you. You gave up your artistic career to please him, and you had a brilliant future. You abandoned your poor father, too, who took to drink when you left.

DIANA. No, no, that is not true. He took to drink before I left.

DUCHESSA. But he drank more heavily afterward, because you sent him more money.

DIANA. Chantel, we have always been friends. Advise me. For the first time I am confronted with a serious danger.

CHANTEL. Do you prefer the offensive or the defensive? The defensive is more dignified, as it permits you to ignore the situation. The secret of defense is delay. In the first place, the Comte's attachment to you, which is something more than passion by this time, or than momentary caprice,

is a point in our favor. In the second place, the Princess does not love the Comte. This adventure is nothing to her but a convenient escape from a temporary embarrassment.

DIANA. Yes, I believe you are right. The defensive has advantages.

CHANTEL. I see only one danger.

DIANA. What is it?

CHANTEL. The delay which it involves, we do not know for how long. The Comte may ruin himself in the meantime. There the danger lies.

DIANA. We had better take the offensive.

CHANTEL. It seems wiser to me.

DIANA. Do you think we might make use of the Princess's lover? He must already be jealous.

CHANTEL. I place no faith in his jealousy; Herr Rosmer is surely acquainted with the financial operations of the Princess. Besides, a man who loves a woman who is above him socially, or who permits her to love him, is not in a position to be jealous. He offers nothing and accepts everything, either because he loves her so much that he is willing to forget his dignity and his self-respect, as well as the proprieties, or otherwise he does not love her at all, and is merely thinking of what he can get out of her. Whichever it is, whether it is love or self-interest, whatever he sees, he will notice nothing. Love is blind while self-interest shuts its eyes. The result is the same.

DIANA. But then?

CHANTEL. The alternative is a scene; let all the world know. Become jealous yourself, attack the Comte and the Princess, drive her out of the house—compel her to avoid appearing where you are. Then Herr Rosmer will be obliged to notice it, as he expects to marry the Princess as soon as she obtains her divorce.

DIANA. Suppose it leads to a duel? An open scandal might drive them together.

CHANTEL. Who? The Comte and Herr Rosmer? Impossible! What has he to do with it? He is only the Princess's lover. If worst comes to worst, before he fought him, they would have to pay back what they owe—which would be clear gain to us, whatever happens.

DIANA. There is something in that.

CHANTEL. Five hundred thousand francs, Comtesse, not to speak of small bills. Then——

DIANA. The scene will be a big one. Fancy trusting a princess with five hundred thousand francs!

CHANTEL. Apparently....

DIANA. The offensive! My mind is made up. All for all! Silence! The concert is over and the audience is coming out. Float in the background.

PRINCESS HELENA, ELSA, MADAME WILF, *the* BARONESS, PRINCE STEPHEN, HERR ROSMER, *the* COMTE, WULF, *and* GOTTFRIED WILF *enter*.

COMTE. Superb! Superb! It is an evening I shall never forget.

VARIOUS GUESTS. Superb! Superb! [*Complete silence.*]

COMTE. How quiet it seems! Everybody is depressed.

MME. WILF. The caress of sublimity has descended upon our souls.

WULF. The audience is annihilated. It is the customary effect.

WILF. Did you observe the transfiguration of the conductor before his orchestra?

WULF. I am no longer myself upon such occasions. I am he—*it*, his spirit. Lay your hand upon my heart; be so kind.... Place your ear there.

ELSA. Oh, indeed!.... How remarkable!

WULF. I beg your pardon. Madame....

CHANTEL. Baroness, you are next.

BARONESS. I? With my ear on a man's chest?

CHANTEL. Upon his bosom.

WULF. Physicians have observed curious phenomena in me immediately after the termination of a concert. Ladies and gentlemen, if a magnetic needle were to be approached to my brain....

COMTE. Oh, oh! This is too much. A concert and lecture in one!

WULF. This is the first time I recall that the trumpets have not been off the key.

WULF. I took the precaution of suppressing them.

WULF. Evidently a wise measure. I hope they have not overlooked supper.

WULF. I saw an immense salmon carried by on a platter as I was conducting the orchestra, entirely surrounded by little shrimps.

WULF. Mere details.

WULF. As we hope, and many of them. The Comte's reputation is magnificent.

DIANA. [*To the DUCHESSA*] What did I tell you? He does not leave her.... I never saw the Comte so excited; he is in earnest. This is the occasion to make a scene.

DUCHESSA. I advise against it. The Comte cannot allow the Princess to be insulted in his house; you may find yourself in a most disagreeable position.

MME. WULF. [*To ELSA*] It was a horrible disappointment when Your Highness declined to sing, as you had promised. The episode of the "Wild Cats" would have been marvellous in your hands. Few artists are capable of interpreting the passage sympathetically.

ELSA. I should not have hesitated, of course, if there had

been no strangers present, but Princess Helena has destroyed the charm of the evening, with its informality.

MME. WILF. She walked out of the concert after hearing the first note.

ELSA. Her attitude has been sufficiently incorrect.

MME. WILF. It might appear presumptuous in me to say so.

BARONESS. [*To PRINCE STEPHEN*] Your Highness is the only representative of the family who is present. Exert your influence with the Princess, as she regards you with favor. Explain to her how her conduct only aggravates the situation. Everybody is gossiping. You must have noticed it this evening. Look around.... While the guests are all worried, Her Highness spends her time laughing.

PRINCE STEPHEN. If the guests are so easily shocked in the house of the Comte de Tournernelles, probably my cousin would reply that it was hardly worth her while to come here to waste the evening.

BARONESS. Do you approve of the conduct of Her Highness? .

PRINCE STEPHEN. No, it is foolish, very foolish indeed. But I see nobody here who is in a position to take exception to it.

BARONESS. The Comtesse is jealous. I fear that she will make a scene.

PRINCE STEPHEN. No, never. The Comtesse is a woman of the world. The Comte could never permit a scene in his house. As far as Herr Rosmer is concerned, he takes it quite coolly. I am sorry for poor Helena.

BARONESS. Now you are sympathizing with her!

PRINCE STEPHEN. With all my heart. She has made a mistake. The opportunity of living a new life was what attracted her to Herr Rosmer, while he merely saw in her the

Princess of Suavia. Neither has found love to be what they thought. Now, how rectify this new mistake? One mistake may be forgiven, one rectification in life. A woman does not look nearly so foolish when she leaves her husband for a lover, as she does afterward when she leaves her lover, even if she goes back to her husband. The only justification for certain mistakes is persevering in them.

BARONESS. Not another lover! Do you mean it? Oh, that would be horrible!

PRINCE STEPHEN. But how natural! Why should Helena resign herself to a second mistake, when she refused to resign herself to the first?

BARONESS. It is not a contingency that I care to contemplate. What will they think in Suavia? Hush! Her Highness may hear....

PRINCE STEPHEN. I do not believe that our ideas are very different, although the subject has not been discussed between us. Our sentimental history has been very much the same.

BARONESS. Have you also made a mistake?

PRINCE STEPHEN. I don't know. My attitude is similar to yours, Baroness, when you close your eyes to what strikes you in the face:—I don't want to know. I am unwilling to believe it, so I do not think of it; I am unwilling to believe it.

MME. WILF. My....my nerves have been on edge for the past half-hour! I cannot control myself any longer.... I must let go somehow. Oh, oh!

ALL. What is the matter? What has happened to Mme. Wilf? What is the trouble?

WULF. Nothing, nothing! Don't touch her! The effect of the music.

WILF. Mother, mother!.... Of course! She is always taken like this after hearing father's music.

COMTE. Ah, insupportable! The imposition has reached the limit.

MME. WILF. Oh! Oh!

WILF. Run for a violin! The first bars of the "Hymn of Life" bring her to with a start.

COMTE. By all means, as long as she makes it in another room, by yourselves. You can play the violin and she can yell there as much as she wants to.

WULF. M. le Comte, it is the only possible relief. Madame, make a great effort——

MME. WILF. It is *he*; *it*—his spirit! I see it, and he calls to me!

COMTE. Chantel, do what you can for these people.... Feed them, and get them out in short order. Under no circumstances are we to hear from them again. It is too much pose to ask us to listen to this music.

MME. WILF, WULF, GOTTFRIED WILF, *and* CHANTEL
go out.

COMTE. In any event this will be our last concert.

PRINCESS HELENA. I must confess it was terrible. My only regret is that I did not hear my new cousin sing.

ELSA. I? I did not sing.

PRINCESS HELENA. But now that we are *en famille* perhaps you will oblige us.

DIANA. *En famille?*

PRINCESS HELENA. Yes, this seems like a family affair to me. The atmosphere is delightfully familiar. We do not mind what we say, and we are not ashamed to sit here and listen to it either. It would not be easy to shock this company. Elsa, my dear, I should like to ask a favor of you, now that the occasion is propitious.

ELSA. Of me?

PRINCESS HELENA. I do so want to hear you sing—I mean

your real songs, the repertoire that you used to sing in the theatre. I have heard so much about you that I am terribly anxious to hear you, although at Court, of course, this sort of thing was impossible.

ELSA. Stephen! Is anything wrong with Her Highness?

PRINCE STEPHEN. Elsa!

ELSA. Tell her to respect me. She has no right, you must not allow her to insult me like this.

PRINCESS HELENA. What is the matter? What is she crying about?

PRINCE STEPHEN. Be quiet! Say nothing.—She thinks you are trying to insult her.

PRINCESS HELENA. I? I insult her? Why should I? She is crazy.

ELSA. Let me alone; don't you talk to me. She has no right to treat me like this. It is all your fault.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Oh, come, come! What is the use of being silly?

PRINCESS HELENA. But, Stephen——

PRINCE STEPHEN. I told you so. They are the ones who cannot forget. *[Goes out with ELSA.]*

PRINCESS HELENA. Does she think that I tried deliberately to insult her? How could she? I ask you, was I wrong? I will be the first to apologize. She promised to sing at the concert this evening. Then why should she be offended because I ask her to sing for us afterward? Everybody knows that she was a comic-opera singer—that is her reputation, her personality, to which she owes her position; but now she attempts to deny it, and is offended because I mention it. She blames it on me—me, who have always admired anybody, man or woman, who has had the courage to make his own way in the world, whatever his social position, and who owes all that he is to his own efforts. *[To DIANA]*

Why, you might just as well question my admiration for you! I envy you for that very reason. The Comte has told me this evening the story of your life, how he met you, how you struggled up, how through sheer force of genius, yes, of genius and determination, you compelled at last the admiration of all Paris. Its authors and artists flung themselves at your feet——

DIANA. And I suppose you would like me to repeat for your benefit some of the pantomimes that made me famous? Well, I am not ashamed of my past like la Königsberg. You cannot offend me by your impertinence.

COMTE. Why, Diana!

PRINCESS HELENA. What is this woman talking about?

DIANA. If either of us had been presented at the Court of Suavia, and had exhibited the same utter lack of taste which Your Highness does here, we should have found ourselves upon the street again at the double-quick.

COMTE. Diana!

PRINCESS HELENA. She insults me!

BARONESS. A scandal! I felt it coming! It will be telegraphed to Suavia!

DUCHESSA. You have said enough for the present. You have shown them who you are.

DIANA and the DUCHESSA move toward the door to pass out.

PRINCESS HELENA. Oh! So you are jealous, are you? Of your Comte? What did you think? Because I have condescended to listen to him, to tolerate his imbecilities——

COMTE. Highness!

PRINCESS HELENA. Because I have done him the honor to permit him to be my creditor——

ALBERT. Helena!

BARONESS. Great God!

COMTE. Your Highness has forgotten herself. An attack of nerves. Besides, you are a woman. As no gentleman of your family is present——

ALBERT. M. le Comte! . . . You understand. . . . Overlook this exhibition. An attack of nerves, as you say.

[The COMTE retires.]

PRINCESS HELENA. Jealous, is she? Of me? Does she flatter herself that a Princess of Suavia can be bought at such a price? All the money of this blithering upstart would not repay me for the annoyance of once visiting his house. I came to enjoy myself, because I chose; it was a caprice; but, frankly, was it worth taking all this trouble only to find myself surrounded by more hypocrisy, more stupid dignity, and a world less of liberty than in my royal palaces? My heart overflowed with happiness, I was sincere, because I supposed that I was among real people at last, who were not afraid to face the facts of life, but here everything is taken in ill part, it gives offense. I was proud to have renounced my rank and station, because I did it for love—it was for love that I stepped down; but these people are not only ashamed of their past, but of the very love which has raised them where they never had any right to be. Miserable creatures, evil-minded, soulless, all of them! Now I see! Now I understand! How can equality ever be possible in this world, when these puny spirits with their vulgarities remind us in spite of ourselves that we are royal?

BARONESS. You ought never to have forgotten it. Pride of race was bound to reassert itself at last.

PRINCESS HELENA. Pride of race? Not at all! Self-respect, common instinct.

ALBERT. Perhaps you appreciate now why I objected to your visiting this house and mingling with these people.

This humiliation should surely be sufficient. You have been insulted by the Comte's mistress, and I was unable to protect you or to receive an explanation. Before I could have done so, I should have been obliged to pay him what we owe. The woman was justified in being jealous, for that matter; your behavior to-night has been susceptible of the worst interpretation.

PRINCESS HELENA. That will do! Enough! No more recriminations from you, nor from anybody. My next step will be to recover my liberty, and to give you yours in return. Baroness, telegraph to Suavia for that money to-night in my name, at whatever cost. I yield, I submit to the terms of the Emperor.

ALBERT. Helena! You will never do that. Impossible!

PRINCESS HELENA. You complain of the humiliations of this life. These are the thanks I receive for accepting them, voluntarily, for the sake of your love! As for demanding satisfaction of the Comte, if it had come to that, you would not have been the one who would have exacted it—it would have been my cousin Stephen. He has not yet stooped so low, nor have I, as to forget the obligation which we owe to our name. [*Discovering STEPHEN, who has entered a moment previously*] Am I right, Stephen?

PRINCE STEPHEN. My dear cousin, it is too late for us now to remember who we are. My situation is as impossible as yours, but your words have decided me. I am myself heavily in debt to the Comte de Tournernelles. Before I could exact satisfaction, like you I should be obliged to throw myself upon the mercy of the Emperor—and the Emperor has no mercy.

BARONESS. He would impose but one condition.

ALBERT. That you return to your husband.

PRINCE STEPHEN. That I divorce my wife.

BARONESS. Certainly. Those are the only terms.

PRINCESS HELENA. The only terms? We must think them over.

ALBERT. What?

PRINCESS HELENA. We must think them over. Must we not, Stephen? . . . No, I can never return to Suavia; that would be to retreat, and I have sworn already that I shall never retreat. Now leave me! When I walk out of this house, it will be upon the arm of the Prince, as I ought, as Princess of Suavia.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Command me.

PRINCESS HELENA. Baroness, Herr Rosmer will see you home. I wish to talk with the Prince. Upon the result of this interview, perhaps, depends the future of our lives.

ALBERT. Baroness, I trust that you will be able to prevent any further outbreaks on the part of Her Highness.

BARONESS. Alas, there was more hope of preventing the first!

The BARONESS and HERR ROSMER go out.

PRINCESS HELENA. What did Elsa say?

PRINCE STEPHEN. It is offensive, absurd. She blames me for the exhibition because I do not treat her with proper respect.

PRINCESS HELENA. Did she dwell upon her humiliations? Suppose we were to remind them of ours?

PRINCE STEPHEN. Which they do not appreciate in the least.

PRINCESS HELENA. I have been through it; I have had the experience. We have made a mistake. Well? What shall we do now?

PRINCE STEPHEN. Admit our mistake?

PRINCESS HELENA. Yes.

PRINCE STEPHEN. And resign ourselves to our fate?

PRINCESS HELENA. No.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Then what shall we do?

PRINCESS HELENA. Resume living.

PRINCE STEPHEN. How?

PRINCESS HELENA. By accepting what life has to offer as we pass, sorrow when it is sorrow, joy when it is joy. At this moment, it offers us—friendship, the mutual sympathy of our hearts, it offers us . . . this music, which haunts our ears and draws us toward itself. It is only a popular song, from a midnight garden not far off, with a halo of legendary, mysterious wickedness. A short while ago, I suggested that we should all visit it together, but, naturally, everybody was shocked. I wonder if you would be shocked, really?

PRINCE STEPHEN. It might amuse me. Let us go. I have had my fill of propriety for the evening.

PRINCESS HELENA. Especially when it descends upon us from quarters in which it is so utterly unexpected. . . . Why, I feel already like a different woman. I am happy now; the past is forgotten. This adventure will repay me for the horrible evening I have spent. And I had expected to be so happy! How beautiful it is to run away, to escape, to fly, always to fly—from somebody, from something!

PRINCE STEPHEN. If only one believes that one is flying toward happiness.

PRINCESS HELENA. No, not toward happiness, because happiness does not exist. There are only happy moments.

PRINCE STEPHEN. There are . . . happy moments.

PRINCESS HELENA. Why not make this one of them?

Curtain

**CHARACTERS APPEARING IN THE
FOURTH ACT**

PRINCESS HELENA

PRINCE STEPHEN

MARGOT

BIONDINETTA

THE WOMAN WITH THE SCAR

AN ENGLISHMAN

THE LITTLE MARQUIS

COSI-COSI

A GENDARME

THE FOURTH ACT

An open-air restaurant at night. The ENGLISHMAN is seated at a table, drinking beer. MARGOT and BIONDINETTA enter.

BIONDINETTA. I told you he wasn't here. He won't come to-night, either. He tells me that he is coming so that I won't look for him where I know he is, where I am going some night to dig a knife into his heart, if he deceives me.

MARGOT. You talk like a fool. Kill a man, eh? Don't you do it, and don't you kill yourself for him, either. He'll be back after you some day soon enough, when you don't want it.

BIONDINETTA. No, he'll never come back. He has money now. Didn't you see? Do you know where he gets all his money?

MARGOT. Of course I do! Do you suppose I'd kill mine for that? When mine bothers me is when he hasn't any money. When he has, I never ask him where he gets it. Do they ask us?

BIONDINETTA. But I don't love anybody but him, and he knows it.

MARGOT. And he loves you; the boy has to live. You ought to be glad of it; it isn't right that you should be the only one who works. Come on, now, and dance. If he thinks you've forgotten him and are in love with some one else, he'll come back fast enough. He'll get tired, like all the rest. You can find people who are willing to hand out a hundred francs, five hundred francs, a thousand francs—but it's only once, because they happen to feel like it, but when it comes to five or ten francs every day, or whatever you've got, and if

you haven't got it you dig it up out of the ground, so that they shan't go without—a man can't have that unless he's got somebody to love him, like you love him, and he'll never find it anywhere else either. Come on and dance.

BIONDINETTA. No, I'm not going. I came here to meet him, and I'm not going away; I mean to look for him, and I'll look for him, even if he kills me.

MARGOT. No, you won't. What? Go there? He is with swells now, you know that. They don't want any scenes. They know how to take care of themselves when they are having a good time, you'd better believe it.

BIONDINETTA. Yes, I know. She's a fine lady and they're grand people, but rotten with sin. They are worse than we are, only more respectable.

MARGOT. That's what you get for having a boy that's good-looking. Why didn't I take this fellow?

BIONDINETTA. Fred, the Englishman? You'd have made a big mistake. He's a sot. He'd march off for a bock with the first one who happened along. I've seen him do it. You are happy now; yours loves you.

MARGOT. Yes, he's so refined; he knows how to treat me. He got into a nasty mess that time I was sick in Paris, so that I shouldn't want for anything—six months in the penitentiary was what they gave him, though nobody would appear against him, not even the man who was wounded; it was safer for him to shut up, and he knew it. Hello! Another quadrille. Come on, we ought to dance. M. Boniface will be angry if we don't. He says unless we dance and get people to spend money in the restaurant, it isn't worth his while to give us tickets. Help me out. There's a ship-load of Italian sailors in to-night; you talk their lingo. They've money after the voyage—plenty of it. Come on and dance.

BIONDINETTA. I'll tell them whatever you want; but not a word on my own account.

ENGLISHMAN. My darling, will you buy me a bock?

MARGOT. You know where you can get a bock that has diamonds in it, when you want it.

ENGLISHMAN. Diamonds? I don't believe in diamonds any more.

MARGOT. No, I suppose you've drunk them all up by this time.

ENGLISHMAN. [*Pointing to the beer*] This doesn't play me the tricks that you do. I am not myself now—I don't feel well; I am sick. Lend me five francs, Margot; have a heart with poor Fred.

MARGOT. Five francs? You can earn them easier than we can.

ENGLISHMAN. Don't you want to lend them to me? I'll find your man, then, and kill him. I am stronger than he is.

MARGOT. Get out! Let go of me, will you? Don't be so rough.

ENGLISHMAN. Give me five francs!

MARGOT. Let go!

BIONDINETTA. I'll scream if you don't.

MARGOT. Don't you do it. Then the police will come, and jail us all. I can handle him myself; he's no good. Now get out!

ENGLISHMAN. All this fuss over five francs! You don't treat me right. But I'll get even with you; you'll be sorry.

MARGOT. Come on and dance.

The LITTLE MARQUIS and COSI-COSI enter.

LITTLE MARQUIS. What is he doing to you?

BIONDINETTA. Ah, so you're here, are you? I never expected it.

LITTLE MARQUIS. Why not? I told you I was coming, and here I am. I suppose I am not a man of my word?

BIONDINETTA. Your word? Well, where have you been then?

LITTLE MARQUIS. That's it! The first question you ask a man is where he has been; afterward you inquire for his health, which doesn't matter. I might have killed myself for all you care—have been dead.

BIONDINETTA. Killed yourself? Not much!

LITTLE MARQUIS. You don't believe it, eh? You tell her.

COSI-COSI. Yes, he might have killed himself. Easily.

BIONDINETTA. Honest?

LITTLE MARQUIS. You think a man is made of stone. I can't stand these rows all the time. After last night—you can tell her. How did I feel?

COSI-COSI. Sick. He fell flat.

MARGOT. Don't you mind what he says. That's the game; they've fixed it up between them. Don't you see? What's that? Hold out your hand. . . . Another ring?

BIONDINETTA. Who gave you that ring?

LITTLE MARQUIS. It isn't mine; it's one I've got to sell.

BIONDINETTA. Who gave you that ring?

LITTLE MARQUIS. Oh, I bought it! Will that do? Good! Now shut up. If it won't do, just as good, see? And shut up.

COSI-COSI. What was the Englishman putting over when we came in?

MARGOT. Oh, nothing! He's drunk.

COSI-COSI. He needs a sound thrashing, and I'm the man to give it to him.

MARGOT. Let him alone, will you?

LITTLE MARQUIS. No, I am the one to do it; I'll show you.

MARGOT. Go along!

LITTLE MARQUIS. He'll wish I had. He'll not stick his nose in this place again. What is the matter with you?

ENGLISHMAN. Do you want to fight? I don't fight over women. Sit down. Waiter! . . . bring a bock. Bring two bocks. Call over your friend.

COSI-COSI. I don't care to sit down.

ENGLISHMAN. I tell you sit down. The first thing that gentlemen do when they meet is talk nice; then they take a drink. Then they fight—only they don't fight over women. You damn fools! We are good friends. Let's get down to business—serious business.

MARGOT. Are you going to sit there and listen to him?

LITTLE MARQUIS. Why not? The man talks sense; it sounds reasonable.

ENGLISHMAN. Tell them to get out. Our business is not for women; it's serious.

BIONDINETTA. But—

LITTLE MARQUIS. Get out; leave us alone. Do you hear?

BIONDINETTA. Yes, listen to me. What business have you got to talk over with them? I know what your business is.

ENGLISHMAN. Tell them to shut up, will you? Can't you shut up your own women?

LITTLE MARQUIS. I told you to shut up and wait for us out there.

MARGOT. Oh, come along! They make me sick. They're always hot to fight for us, but that's before they begin. By the time they do, they are friends, and then they fight us—to a finish. Come on and dance.

[MARGOT and BIONDINETTA go out.]

ENGLISHMAN. Waiter! Bring three bocks.

PRINCESS HELENA and PRINCE STEPHEN enter.

PRINCESS HELENA. The dance could not be more respect-

able. We have been treated with the utmost consideration. If we had remained a few minutes longer, we should undoubtedly have found that it was our conduct that was incorrect, as it was at the Comte's villa.

PRINCE STEPHEN. We have failed to preserve our incognito. I heard our names whispered as we passed.

PRINCESS HELENA. Amusing, was it not? Those who recognized you said: "Prince Stephen of Suavia out for the night with a *cocotte*." Those who recognized me: "Princess Helena and her lover—or one of her lovers."

PRINCE STEPHEN. A great many recognized us both. I wonder what they thought?

PRINCESS HELENA. Probably that we were here out of curiosity, or for some improper purpose.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Well, are you satisfied? Shall we go?

PRINCESS HELENA. Have you repented of our adventure so soon?

PRINCE STEPHEN. I was not thinking of myself, but of you. The world will be full of this exploit to-morrow.

PRINCESS HELENA. You are more cowardly than I. You realize that you have made a mistake, but instead of pushing on, you retreat. You remind me of one of those fantastic peoples who overthrow a monarchy because it is tyrannical and establish a republic; then, because the republic does not bring them happiness, they promptly restore the monarchy. But that is not my way. If the republic proved a failure, I should declare for a state of anarchy, but I should never retreat. I am enchanted with this spot. This is life—to be here, to see everything, to shut one's eyes to nothing; to sympathize, to understand....

PRINCE STEPHEN. Everything? Perhaps that was what induced you to fall in love with Herr Rosmer. It was not the man, it was the opening out of a new vista of life.

PRINCESS HELENA. Yes, it is true. He was the only person who brought to our Palace the atmosphere of another world, and of truths that were different from ours. His was a different environment. I had no choice when I loved him any more than the prisoner has a choice, whose one desire is to regain his liberty, and who flees by the first avenue which lies open, which leads to freedom and the outer air.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Instead of leading to freedom, you found, when you followed it, that you had merely changed prisons.

PRINCESS HELENA. Wholly to my disadvantage. It was never my privilege to meet a more persistent stickler for etiquette and every known form of propriety than Herr Rosmer. If you are perfectly frank with me—and with yourself—you must confess that your experience has been the same. You were as sadly mistaken as I in imagining that an unequal match was the most effective assertion of your individuality. We should have begun by living our new lives; then love would have come in due season.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Our experience reminds me of a story which was told me by one of the officers of my regiment, a young man of the most distinguished lineage in Suavia. He fell in love with a girl who lived in the same city, who belonged to the working classes, and to him the charm of their association lay in wandering about the humbler quarters of the city, arm in arm with his girl. They visited the obscurer cafés, they frequented the popular theatres—in a word, he became another person; he escaped from his environment, from the society in which he had always moved, from the obligations of the life which was official. But he soon noticed that the girl was always bored when she was in his company; she looked upon those places with which she had

always been familiar with disgust. What she desired was to exhibit herself upon the fashionable promenades, to visit the principal restaurants, the theatres which were patronized by the aristocracy—in a word, the other life; and it was natural. What amused the one, bored the other. So, shortly after, my friend fell in love with a noble lady, of flawless birth, and then for the first time he was able to run about the lower quarters to his heart's content, and to visit all the vulgar theatres and disreputable cafés, because they all proved equally amusing to that noble lady, and so they were both always of one accord. I wonder if our experience has been the same?

PRINCESS HELENA. It has.

PRINCE STEPHEN. We do not live as abstractions in the world, as fragments of the ideal. We are something in ourselves, but the environment which surrounds us is much more than ourselves—it is the landscape in which we are figures. The scenery is half of the play, in life as upon the stage.

PRINCESS HELENA. Yes, there are times and places in which we might fall in love with the first person to present himself, without ever having seen him before, or stopping even to ask his name. I wonder: what are you thinking of now?

PRINCE STEPHEN. I was listening to that waltz. It is one of the memories of my life—a waltz that Elsa used to sing in the theatre.

PRINCESS HELENA. When she was still a popular favorite, a famous actress in your eyes, not merely a respectable woman to whom the mention of her triumphs as an artist gives offense. There is a waltz also in my life. Waltzes blend themselves so easily with the past, and remain in the memory even after years. Have you never noticed it?

There is a quick movement in every waltz, joyous, triumphal, and then a hushed, subdued *ritornello* whose burden is slow and reluctant, sad as the memory of a joy that is past. When the lights are out and the dance is over, and we are alone in the silence of the soul, the echo of a waltz still lingers in our ears—the echo of a waltz that drops tears.

PRINCE STEPHEN. What is your favorite music?

PRINCESS HELENA. Do not inquire into my musical tastes; they are of deplorable vulgarity. Music appeals to me because of the words I associate with it, and so one air is as good as another. How empty a man's soul must be which is unable to provide words to any music! I am more exacting with poets, because they speak for themselves, and in their case I will tolerate no vulgarity.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Who is your favorite poet?

PRINCESS HELENA. Women feel very much toward poets as they do toward other men. They do not love the ones whom all the world admires. We single out one quality, perhaps, for our love and admiration amid a multitude of defects, or it may be that we love the very defects themselves, because then we know that our choice has been our own—it has been more truly ours.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Do you admire Shelley, the divine Shelley?

PRINCESS HELENA. I admire and love him. He was the universal lover.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Are you familiar with his life?

PRINCESS HELENA. It was wholly wonderful, more wonderful even than his verse. He persuaded his own wife to abet his elopement with Emilia Viviani. What marvellous power of suggestion that genius must have possessed, which was able to unite two women in a single love!

PRINCE STEPHEN. Do you remember his verses?

"True love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
Gazing on many truths."

And then he adds:

"Narrow

The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
The life that wears, the spirit that creates
One object, and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eternity."

PRINCESS HELENA. It is Gabriele d'Annunzio's "Hymn to Life":

"Diversity, vision and siren,
I never chose—to choose were to slight you,
Diversity, vision and siren!
The rose that is red, the rose that is white you
Present to the taste
Both as one.
All tastes are the same
And all savors,
All things pure and impure to the flame
Of my love,
Diversity, vision and siren,
Because I love you, I love you, I love you!"

[*A pause.*]

What are you thinking of now?

PRINCE STEPHEN. I was thinking—what our life was at the Court of Suavia. What a wall of convention, of prejudices, and of jealousies hemmed us round! We lived there almost together, and yet we never knew each other at all. I always thought that you were a frivolous creature, wild

and foolish. Even your love-affair appeared to me ridiculous, because I felt that if you had really been as independent and as forceful as was said, then you would have refused to be forced into a marriage against your will.

PRINCESS HELENA. At that time I fancied that marriage was the first step toward becoming free, so I consented to it gladly, as no doubt you understand. I had always heard that you were a dull person, steeped in useless learning, and consequently without any knowledge of life, whom any woman could twist about her finger, if she cared to take the trouble.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Now what do you think of me?

PRINCESS HELENA. I think that we might have been very happy.

PRINCE STEPHEN. As we are to-night. Life is strange. After all our striving, all our efforts to attain happiness, when the inevitable hour arrives and we look into our hearts and ask what has been the sum of sorrow or of happiness in our lives, it may be that the only recollection which is not tinged with sadness, will be that of some idle encounter such as this, which chance has brought, to linger in the memory like a high moment of life, which we cherish as a fond and beautiful dream.

PRINCESS HELENA. It takes so little to make us happy—a beautiful night of deep and faultless blue, the murmur of the sea afar off, a vulgar dance here at our side, with its cheap music, and the mutual confidences of our hearts as they search to find words of absolute truth that they may reveal themselves and trust entirely.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Or verses of favorite poets to speak for us, or silences deep as the night, yet clear as this spread of lucent sky with all its host of stars. Like stars in the night, the eyes are the light of silence.

PRINCESS HELENA. Perhaps we shall never be more happy. Can it be that all our efforts and struggles to obtain even a small part of that which we desire in life, are fruitless? Is it that life admits of no violence, and only when we have ceased to hope and struggle and strive, lets fall upon us as if by chance, a little of the great store of happiness which it treasures? If it is, then let us try not to think, let us lull our wills to sleep, that life may bring us joy or sorrow at its pleasure. Who can say but that when we think that we are shaping life most surely to our purposes, we are not submitting most blindly to the immutable laws of fate?

THE WOMAN WITH THE SCAR *enters, and runs rapidly up to the PRINCE and PRINCESS. A GENDARME follows her.*

PRINCESS HELENA. [*Surprised and startled*] Oh!

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. Ah! Please excuse me.... Don't be frightened, lady. I thought—but it isn't he. A mistake. Strangers, eh? Foreigners?....they don't know me. I am sorry if I frightened the lady. She is beautiful.

LITTLE MARQUIS. [*Calling from outside*] Are you coming? You are invited to-night.

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. Let me alone, will you?

[Goes out.]

GENDARME. [*Approaching the PRINCE and PRINCESS with ostentatious deference and respect*] I am sorry the woman annoyed you.

PRINCESS HELENA. No, poor thing! What a singular person! Apparently she thought she knew us.

GENDARME. Pardon, Your Highness, pardon.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Ah! So you know then?

GENDARME. I have watched Your Highnesses since your arrival. It was imprudent of Your Highnesses to venture here alone.

PRINCESS HELENA. But why? The behavior of these people could not possibly be more correct, especially after the villa of the Comte de Tournerelles. Don't you think so, Stephen?

GENDARME. Superficially, perhaps, but a night seldom passes without some incident which is unpleasant. These are dangerous folk, without exception. Three of the worst are near by—the Little Marquis, an Englishman who was a jockey, long since disqualified for cheating, and a fine specimen of Italian, known as Cosi-Cosi. They are watching us now. All have long records in the police courts, and at least one has been within a step of the guillotine.

PRINCESS HELENA. How wonderful! What marvellous people, living by their wits, by sheer strength of brute courage, snapping their fingers in the face of society, its morality, and its laws! They live. This is life!

PRINCE STEPHEN. Professors of strenuousness, as we should call them nowadays.

PRINCESS HELENA. Who was that singular woman?

GENDARME. She is crazy. They call her the Woman With the Scar.

PRINCESS HELENA. What a horrible name!

GENDARME. Would you like to see? I'll send for her. Come here! Don't be afraid. Tell this lady and gentleman who you are.

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. No, let me go. Don't you believe what he says. There's no truth in it.

GENDARME. Come here, I tell you. Loosen that collar around your neck.

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. Take your hands off me.

PRINCESS HELENA. Don't hurt her! Let go. Poor woman!

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. Thanks, lady. I'll show it to you, if you like. Here....

PRINCESS HELENA. Oh! Terrible!

PRINCE STEPHEN. What is it?

PRINCESS HELENA. Can't you see? A great gash, which circles her neck entirely, like a collar. Where did you get this scar?

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. I did it myself; it was an accident!

GENDARME. You cannot believe what she says. She met a stranger one night at the Casino two years ago; he was a foreigner, and they went out together—it was one of I don't know how many such adventures. The man was a professional gambler who had lost everything—we have plenty of them every season—and he determined to recoup himself at the expense of one of these unfortunate women, who, naturally, are not able to be too particular about the persons with whom they deal. As soon as he thought she was asleep, he ripped the lock off the drawer where he expected to find her valuables; but she awoke, and before she could cry out, he flung himself upon her to kill her; and he thought that he had killed her. The wound was a terrible one, as you see. He fled....

PRINCE STEPHEN. But surely you were able to arrest him?

GENDARME. The next morning, although she was in no condition to appear against him. They had been seen leaving the Casino together; they had been observed when they entered the house. We had no difficulty in apprehending the man.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Needless to say he paid dearly for his exploit.

GENDARME. You will not believe it, but when he was taken before this woman, she denied roundly that he was the

man with whom she had spent the night, or that he had attempted to kill her.

PRINCESS HELENA. Perhaps he was not. There may have been some mistake.

GENDARME. There could be no doubt of it. He was the man. We found the jewels on him, and the money.

PRINCE STEPHEN. In that case——

GENDARME. We were helpless. What *could* we do in the face of the uncontradicted testimony of such a witness?

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. It's a lie, the whole story! It wasn't he. He didn't do it.

GENDARME. Nonsense! We have the facts; we know why he did it. It seems incredible.

PRINCESS HELENA. No, I can understand; I can understand that sublime silence. That man had known how to make himself loved in one night.

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. Lady!——

PRINCESS HELENA. But what became of him? How did he repay her act of silence?

GENDARME. He took ship for America. Since then her one idea has been to go to him. Whatever she earns, she saves toward the voyage. She is miserably poor, she is even obliged to beg, now that her earnings are insufficient.

PRINCESS HELENA. Is it possible? And all your illusion is to join him again? Speak frankly, my poor woman.

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. Yes, all.

PRINCESS HELENA. All? [*To STEPHEN*] It is in our power to make the memory of this moment even happier in our lives. The happiness of this poor creature lies in our hands.

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. What do you mean?

PRINCESS HELENA. Nothing. You shall go to him, I promise you. [*To the GENDARME*] Bring me her address in the morning.

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. What is she talking about? It's a lie. You are laughing at me——

GENDARME. Stop! Do you know with whom you are speaking? Down on your knees, and beg pardon! And away with you!

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. Oh, lady! Lady! I kiss your hand.... I am going! Going! It is my voyage! I shall never get there, I know that; it would be too much happiness. I shall die on the journey!

GENDARME. No, you won't. You will find him and he will kill you. And this time he will make a good job of it.

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. Find him? He can kill me then if he wants to; I am willing.

GENDARME. If he really kills you and they catch him, you won't be able to save him then like you did last time.

WOMAN WITH THE SCAR. Oh, yes, I will! Because I have a letter, and it will be suicide. And he will be saved! I have planned it all beforehand. *[She goes out.]*

PRINCE STEPHEN. What an extraordinary woman!

GENDARME. Did you ever see anything to equal it?

PRINCESS HELENA. Oh! If passion and madness were never to sweep through our souls, what would be the value of life?

GENDARME. Perhaps I had best remain with Your Highnesses?

PRINCE STEPHEN. No, no; it is quite unnecessary. Ah!.... thank you. And good night.

GENDARME. Under no circumstances. I cannot accept anything.

PRINCESS HELENA. Remember to send me her address in the morning.

GENDARME. At your service.

[Goes out.]

PRINCE STEPHEN. As you see, we are known. Our presence here is no secret.

PRINCESS HELENA. Where shall we go where we may cease to be what we are? Among these people, upon the uttermost edge of society, we fancied that we were forgotten. But the gendarme reminds us that he is in the secret; he is watching over us, to protect us.

PRINCE STEPHEN. It cannot be helped; you heard what he said. These people are dangerous.

PRINCESS HELENA. People are dangerous everywhere; the whole world is like this, and so are our own souls—the eternal struggle of life, force against force, the hand of those who seek to live their own lives as individuals in the name of human instinct, against the hand of those who would maintain the social fabric in the common name of all. On the one side the criminal, on the other the police; and in the great world as in this little world, all the classes which do duty as police, with their codes of morals, their sacrosanct dignities and their laws, are able to accomplish no more in their fight with the classes which we call criminal, than we see them do here; they impart an air of gayety to the dance, which seems to be respectable under the paternal eye of the police, while in reality the dancers are doing nothing but plotting and scheming to outwit them. The very life of these people is to outwit the police. How would any human life be possible if we were not able to outwit the social laws?

PRINCE STEPHEN. I am amazed to hear you talk. How is it that you were permitted reading so radical, so subversive at the Court of Suavia?

PRINCESS HELENA. Does it sound as if it were reading to you? No, the ideas are my own. I feel as I do because I have never allowed myself to be frightened by any truth, and I have never become so enamored of any, that I have been

afraid to see it transformed into a lie. If I could look into my soul every day and discover a new truth, which when found would disarrange my life completely, I should not hesitate to destroy my life every day so as to live a new life every day with a new truth. Is that the way that you feel?

PRINCE STEPHEN. It is so hard to destroy! Who knows? —when love has already become a lie in our hearts, it may still be, perhaps, the truth of another heart, which we have no right to destroy.

PRINCESS HELENA. Do you believe that either Elsa or Herr Rosmer would have any regrets?

PRINCE STEPHEN. I believe that it is not so easy to escape responsibility in life, nor to stifle the pangs of remorse. Possibly the motives of the woman who is now my wife, and of the man who is now your lover, may not have been altogether disinterested when they accepted our love. Yet we led them to believe that they might safely build the future fabric of their lives upon it. If we fail them now, then what of that future? It becomes impossible. How false their position, to what humiliation they will be exposed, to what reprisals! And our condition will be no better. We shall no longer be romantic lovers who have sacrificed everything to love. Another experiment, and we shall renounce something more than our dignity as Princes; we shall forfeit our self-respect as well.

PRINCESS HELENA. Then . . . the past must always influence our lives. There can never be a moment which we can really call ours, when we speak and feel and love as at that moment we really do. The dead body of something must always be chained at our heels. No, I can no longer pray at an altar when I have lost my faith. My prayers end, my faith is exhausted. I must love when I love, forget when I forget. If I were to hesitate now, I should go further; I

should return to the Court of Suavia, I should again become Princess. Duty for duty, respect for respect, I should accept those which are mine, which belong to my race, to my name. All that these democrats value in our love, is the opportunity which it affords them to become Princes like ourselves.

PRINCE STEPHEN. The aspiration of every true democrat who foments a revolution.

PRINCESS HELENA. The only revolution which can be productive of good in the world will be a revolution undertaken by us, the great, from above, who are already equals. Then it will be a disinterested revolution. We shall not be seeking riches nor liberty, nor even justice—we shall simply be seeking the truth. And the truth is—for us—to-night—that we may be happy, that we may unite our lives and destinies in one, while the memory of the Court of Suavia fades as dimly from our sight as the illusion of that bourgeois home which, in the name of a false happiness, we had dreamed. Ah, no! It was not happiness, it was not life—not yet. Life, to us, is to love each other—to love you.

PRINCE STEPHEN. Forever?

PRINCESS HELENA. To-day, to-morrow, a few hours longer... perhaps only to-night. Who can tell? What does it matter? There are dreams which are worth all the realities of life. In another moment, I may feel as you do, that there are duties and responsibilities and the sting of remorse, that we have done wrong, that we must turn back, yes, that we shall turn back, even that... we ought. But not yet! First, let us talk of ourselves again, of anything, nothing, as before... of verses, and music afar off, the blue heaven above us, while in the distance lies the sea, and silence—silence, deep as the night.

PRINCE STEPHEN. My Princess Bébé! You touch the

world with joy, you infuse our thoughts with light. Life becomes more intense at your side, and the soul stretches out toward infinity.

PRINCESS HELENA. Which is life. To understand life, to understand all of it, to love it wholly, and then to live it—to live it all our lives!

PRINCE STEPHEN. No, not to live it. For life is sad and bitter, it is doing evil and suffering wrong—but to dream, to dream as we do now. . . .

PRINCESS HELENA. To live—to dream! Both—what does it matter? To love. To love is all. It is dreaming and it is living!

Curtain

THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE

COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

**FIRST PRESENTED AT THE TEATRO DE LA COMEDIA, MADRID,
ON THE EVENING OF THE EIGHTH OF OCTOBER, 1901**

CHARACTERS

JOSEFINA
THE MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES
DOÑA O
ESPERANZA
JIMENA
BELISA
THE MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO
TERESA
LA MENÉNDEZ
A MAID
DON SANTIAGO
MANOLO
PACO
DON TEODORO
DON GUILLERMO
DON BALDOMERO
THE MARQUIS OF TORRELODONES
DON BASILIO
ANTONIO CAMPOS
PIMENTÓN
POLITO
REGUERA
GARCÉS
DON TRINO
DON ROSENDO
DAMIAN
A CLERK
SERVANT

Ladies, Gentlemen, Townspeople, and Visitors

The scene is Moraleda, a supposed provincial capital of Spain

THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE

THE FIRST ACT

The main square of Moraleda. As the curtain rises, the church-bells ring and a discharge of fireworks is heard. Crowds move backward and forward across the stage in every direction. Newsboys rush up and down calling "Daily Mail," "Voice," "Programme of the Bull-fight," "Names and Descriptions of all the Bulls."

Presently DON ROSENDO disengages himself from the crowd and seats himself at one of the tables which stand before the café opening upon the main square. DAMIAN approaches him.

DAMIAN. Good morning, Don Rosendo.

ROSENDO. Good morning.

DAMIAN. A fine day, sir! If this weather only continues through the feria! Well, what will be it to-day, Don Rosendo? Beer? [*Saluting the passers-by*] Good morning, gentlemen. A fine day, eh? If we could only have this weather every fiesta! [*To DON ROSENDO*] Did you say beer?

ROSENDO. No. Bring me coffee and toast.

DAMIAN. Coffee and toast? [*Laughing*] Diablo, Don Rosendo! What ever put such an idea in your head?

ROSENDO. Man! One must eat. After dressing the window since six o'clock in the morning....

DAMIAN. Busy times for us all, Don Rosendo. Do you open to-day?

ROSENDO. Only the window; this is a holiday.

DAMIAN. Yes, but in the middle of the feria! You will lose money.

ROSENDO. What of it? I cannot afford to offend the ladies. They have formed a society under the patronage of the bishop—you know the bishop has always been very partial to me?

DAMIAN. I know, sir. [*Calling*] Coffee and toast! Well, every man to his taste. Excuse me, a lady— [*To a young woman who is passing*] Won't you have something?.... Oh! I see. A full basket?.... Guests, eh?.... Of course!.... Well, if you won't.... [*Returning to DON ROSENDO*] Don Baldomero's housekeeper. A fine girl! They say she's the real mistress of the house; a mountaineer from Villaquejido—yes, sir. Don Baldomero has an eye for the ladies. If she is number one, number two for Doña O, although they tell me she was beautiful once, yes she was! But time flies. That girl and Don Baldomero—would you believe it?—just between us, don't say a word—she poisons her mistress's life. Yes, sir! What do you think of that? All I know is she comes in every morning to get an ice.

ROSENDO. You poison your ices.

DAMIAN. No, what an idea! Speaking of antidotes, did you read "The Memoirs of a Chief of Police. A Half Century of Crime"? An old poisoner, who always gave his victims something deadly in their coffee, which it was impossible to distinguish from the drink, until one day the chief of police got down to the bottom of his cup——

ROSENDO. But man! My coffee!

DAMIAN. Your coffee? *Caramba!* Haven't you had yours yet? Really, I have to laugh, Don Rosendo. Coming!.... The toast on the side?

ROSENDO. Wherever it happens to drop.

DAMIAN *goes out. Meanwhile LA MENÉNDEZ and GARCÉS have entered, seating themselves at one of the tables. As DAMIAN is about to disappear into the café, GARCÉS calls to him.*

DAMIAN. [*Re-entering*] Well, what is it going to be?

GARCÉS. Nothing at present. Bring pen and paper.

DAMIAN. And the lady?

GARCÉS. The same for the lady.

DAMIAN. Pen and paper for two, sir?

GARCÉS. No, no, nothing at present.

DAMIAN. [*Calling*] Pen and paper! [*To DON ROSENDO*] From the theatre—the company that's playing through the feria. Not so bad, eh? On the side. . . . Coming! [*Goes out.*]

MENÉNDEZ. Are you writing to some one?

GARCÉS. No. We are expected to order: I can do my accounts. I am not like most actors—Bohemians, who know nothing about business. I keep all my bills. Whatever I make, I always save half, and am never in want.

Figuring at his accounts. DAMIAN *re-enters.*

DAMIAN. [*To DON ROSENDO*] The toast, sir. [*Calling through the window*] Coffee!

MENÉNDEZ. I shall not pay that rascal more than four pesetas when the feria is over. Now he is charging six for a room opening on an inner court with a bed in it that's so big that no woman could ever occupy it alone.

GARCÉS. Don't say that.

MENÉNDEZ. Why? Did I say anything?

GARCÉS. Say occupy—not alone. Don't you see? It sounds better. Don't you understand syntax? Can't you express yourself correctly? How do you expect to appear in a purely literary play unless you express yourself properly, unless you know grammar? It is easy to see you were brought up in the varieties.

MENÉNDEZ. Yes, and there was something doing in the varieties while I was in them, I can tell you. Now what do we get with this legitimate stuff? Five coppers a week—when we get them. The people here are all against us. They

won't let us play "*Oscurantismo*"; it's the only show we have that has a chance.

GARCÉS. "*Oscurantismo*"· there is a *b* between the *o* and the *s*.

MENÉNDEZ. O, be. . . .*s*!

GARCÉS. Yes, with emphasis on the *s*. Correct! And you are to play the part of Lucinda, the personification of wisdom. I suppose you understand that the play is wholly symbolic? Have you prepared yourself for your part? You don't even know what you are going to wear.

MENÉNDEZ. With our trunks held for board in Madrid?

GARCÉS. Never mind our trunks. Don Paco has promised me money from the advance. Then we can send to Madrid and there are our clothes.

MENÉNDEZ. Yes, advance! Somehow or other, I have an idea that we are going to be run out of this place without any advance.

GARCÉS. Run without any advance? Impossible!

MENÉNDEZ. They say this town is very puritanical—that is proper, I suppose. They'll never let us play "*Oscurantismo*."

GARCÉS. Correct this time.

MENÉNDEZ. If they do, nobody will come to see us.

GARCÉS. Pshaw! There is a strong liberal element.

MENÉNDEZ. It will get a chill the first night and after that it won't be heard from. Besides, if the women don't come, the men won't. Then what will become of the audience?

GARCÉS.

"Out, gentlemen, to die!
The ladies stay and pray."

MENÉNDEZ. The papers all score us. They call us actresses Messalinas.

GARCÉS. Oh, people make allowances for that.

MENÉNDEZ. They say the actors are rotten.

GARCÉS. That is too bad!

MENÉNDEZ. And I'd hate to tell you what they say about the management.

GARCÉS. Bigots! Fanatics!—Waiter, the papers! The morning papers!

DAMIAN. Here you are, sir: *The Echo, The Voice*. When do you open? Believe me, the town is on tiptoe. I wonder if you are going to play that piece which has made such a sensation? We certainly do need it here. People are very pharisaical.

GARCÉS. Pharisaical is the word.

DAMIAN. The fact is, the ladies have formed a league.

GARCÉS. A league?

DAMIAN. Yes, sir, and they will be against you. They have been here already to ask the proprietor not to distribute the hand-bills nor to allow placards to be hung in the café.

MENÉNDEZ. What do you think of that?

GARCÉS. Bigots! Fanatics! Spain is going to the dogs. They'll rend us limb from limb.

MENÉNDEZ. And nobody will come to see us! I knew it all the time.

DAMIAN. Not if you have a league of ladies against you.

Music and cries down the street. A number of boys run across the stage.

MENÉNDEZ. What is the matter?

GARCÉS. What has happened?

DAMIAN. It's the bull-fighters—the *toreros* arriving at their hotel. The Hotel of the Universe, sir.

GARCÉS. What enthusiasm! Rome in her decadence was never like this.

DAMIAN. Campos, the *torero* of the day. Ah!

MENÉNDEZ. Who gets six thousand pesetas at every *corrida*?

GARCÉS. And the fellow doesn't even know how to talk!

DAMIAN. Really, you do him injustice. Campos is a very cultivated person; it is pleasure to listen to him. He can converse upon any topic—politics, for instance, music. It is the same thing as reading the papers. He is received by the best people.

GARCÉS. Would you believe it, at our boarding-house they wanted to make us pay in advance?

DAMIAN. Are you going to the fight?

GARCÉS. No, I detest the spectacle. They usually send me free tickets when I am in Madrid out of compliment, but I always get rid of them to some friend at a discount, and so save myself the trouble of going.

DAMIAN. [*To DON ROSENDO*] Are you going, Don Rosendo?

ROSENDO. I may at the last moment. When you think how these *toreros* used to slink in at the station with their packs on their backs, and then look at these fellows. . . . Did you see? Riding if you please in the coach of the Marquis of Solar! How are the bulls this year?

DAMIAN. A new herd in the plaza, belonging to the Marquis of Torreldones. Campos insisted upon it, as he is a friend of the Marquis's daughter. She is in town to see the *corrida*. They are related to the Governor.

ROSENDO. Are they staying at the Palace? Now I remember they were in the shop yesterday to make some purchases with the Governor's wife. Clearly people of taste.

DAMIAN. Here comes the Governor.

ROSENDO. On his way to service at the cathedral. [*DON SANTIAGO enters, surrounded by a group of dignified and elderly*

gentlemen. They pass across the stage] Your servant, Your Excellency.

SANTIAGO. Delighted to see you. [*Goes out.*]

GARCÉS. Was that the Governor?

ROSENDO. What a cultivated gentleman!

GARCÉS. Is he a good man?

ROSENDO. Excellent.

MENÉNDEZ. Then he will not interfere with us.

GARCÉS. Don't say that. Tell me, is he liberal in his opinions?

ROSENDO. Liberal? In Moraleda it isn't worth one's while to be liberal. Imagine, every year on the eleventh of February the republicans unite to dine together in this café, and they always eat at two tables, because there are four of them, and they are divided into two parties.

MENÉNDEZ. Gracious! What a place to come to! The minute you scent money, touch Paco for the advance.

GARCÉS. Scent money? How you talk!

DoÑA O and ESPERANZA enter from DON ROSENDO'S shop.

DoÑA O. We have been shopping so long that we shall be too late for the sermon.

ESPERANZA. Don't be silly, mamma. You know Josefina said there was no need to hurry. She promised to keep two good seats for us.

ROSENDO. [*Bowing*] Señora Doña O! Señorita Esperanza!

DoÑA O. Why, Don Rosendo! We just this moment left your shop.

ROSENDO. To what am I indebted for the honor? The shop is closed to-day.

DoÑA O. Another notion of my daughter's! She insists that if she is going to the bull-fight, she must have a mantilla with tassels on it.

ROSENDO. How charmingly appropriate!

ESPERANZA. Thank you so much. Who is that woman you were talking to?

ROSENDO. Hm! I don't know....that is, a stranger. The fact is, they were asking me....

DOÑA O. [*Looking them over*] Heavens! But she has a bad face. I hope I do not do her injustice.

MENÉNDEZ. [*Aside to GARCÉS*] Look at that old hypocrite staring at me.

GARCÉS. Don't you stare back. Somebody must have manners.

ROSENDO. I hope you found something to suit.

DOÑA O. I arranged with the boy to send home some things on approval. We can make up our minds later at our leisure.

ROSENDO. As you say.

DOÑA O. Heaven knows what we are going to do with any more mantillas! We have them by the dozen in the house already, and of the very best quality: blacks, whites, creams, browns. But somehow or other, something always seems to be lacking. My daughter always wants something that she hasn't yet got.

ROSENDO. It is the way with all young ladies.

ESPERANZA. I never have anything that I want, Don Rosendo; they always advise me.

DOÑA O. For heaven's sake, don't begin talking nonsense! Fortunately you understand, Don Rosendo.

ROSENDO. I know her father.

ESPERANZA. I never have my own way. I have nothing to live for....

DOÑA O. My dear, don't make yourself ridiculous. The next thing, I suppose, she'll be wanting to die.

ROSENDO. Doña Esperauncita!

ESPERANZA. I am very unhappy!

DOÑA O. Don't you believe a word of it. Fortunately you understand. . . .

ROSENDO. Perfectly, Doña O.

DOÑA O. However, you might send the mantillas. Meanwhile, we shall be at the cathedral.

ROSENDO. Does His Reverence preach this morning?

DOÑA O. Yes, and he will have something to say, too, which will be a novelty. Did you ever hear of such an outrage? In the midst of the feria these impudent actors come here to perform this infamous play!

MENÉNDEZ. Will you listen to that?

GARCÉS. Calm yourself. Somebody must be tolerant.

DOÑA O. Oh, His Reverence will be heard from! He knows what he is talking about—and yet all the while it really seems as if he were saying nothing at all.

ROSENDO. I have noticed that myself.

ESPERANZA. What an attractive display you have for the fiesta!

ROSENDO. I always endeavor to present some novelty for the holidays, if only for the honor of the shop—and Moraleda.

DOÑA O. You show excellent taste.

ESPERANZA. How cunning, mamma! Look! An orchestra of pigs!

ROSENDO. Did you notice the brooches? They are *art nouveau*.

ESPERANZA. Yes, they were lovely. Send me home some to select from.

DOÑA O. And don't forget the pigs. I can see she has set her heart on them. Even then she won't be satisfied.

ROSENDO. Hardly, at her age. Young ladies don't know what they want. As you say, when they do, it is always something that they haven't yet got.

DOÑA O. Good morning, Don Rosendo. Come, Esperancita! Don't let me catch you looking in that window again.

ROSENDO. I shall send everything. Good morning.

ESPERANZA. Do you know, instead of those pigs I believe I'd rather have that dog in the automobile? The little rascal!

ROSENDO. Suit yourself.

DOÑA O. What did I tell you? Hurry, my dear! If we don't, we shall be too late to get seats.

DOÑA O *and* ESPERANZA *go out, continuing the conversation.*

MENÉNDEZ. Are those some of your best people?

DAMIAN. I should say they were! They are the wife and daughter of Don Baldomero Remolinos, the richest man in Moraleda. The girl is an only child and will inherit half the province.

ROSENDO. They call her the Golden Girl. Her parents deny her nothing.

DAMIAN. Except her marriage with Don Manolito. They have some pretty hot times together—at least so I hear from the servants.

ROSENDO. Why shouldn't her parents object? Who is Don Manolito? The Governor's secretary—one of those bounders from Madrid. It is all his fault the way things go here. Don Santiago does nothing. Beyond question, he was responsible for that last gambling scandal.

DAMIAN. You see, sir, the secretary and the Governor's wife. . . .

GARCÉS. Aha! Good for Moraleda!

MENÉNDEZ. And yet they make so much fuss about a play.

ROSENDO. How much do I owe you?

DAMIAN. Forty centimos, and a beer yesterday.

ROSENDO. That's so, I forgot. I must hurry and send those things to Doña O.

DAMIAN. Good morning, Don Rosendo.

ROSENDO. Good morning.

GARCÉS. Good morning.

MENÉNDEZ. Good-by. [DON ROSENDO goes out.]

GARCÉS. [*Nodding toward the rear*] The proprietor of that shop?

DAMIAN. Yes, sir, and a very liberal gentleman, accommodating, always polite with the ladies, although his customers are all respectable folk....

MENÉNDEZ. I didn't like the way he spoke of Madrid. Bounders! I am a Madrileña.

DAMIAN. Oh, don't mind him! When his first wife ran off the second time, it was with a gentleman from Madrid.

GARCÉS. Prejudice, of course.

DON TEODORO and DON GUILLERMO enter.

GUILLERMO. How do you know?

TEODORO. Oh, it's a long story, but delicious! When I make up my mind to find out a thing, depend upon me. Man! Don Rosendo's shop is closed.

GUILLERMO. So it is. We might stop at the café. We have time for a vermouth before the music.

TEODORO. [*Discovering LA MENÉNDEZ*] I remember that face.

GUILLERMO. Strangers.

TEODORO. Damian!

DAMIAN. Ah, gentlemen! You are early this morning. What weather we are having for the feria! Well, what is it going to be?

GUILLERMO. Bring two vermouths with bitters.

DAMIAN. How is it that you are not at the cathedral? I know you are not overreligious, but, Don Teodoro, if only to see the ladies....

TEODORO. No, I saw all that I wanted in the Calle San

Pablo—the display was satisfactory. Every day they grow more beautiful. There's a great advance this year.

DAMIAN. Clotilda, the hair-dresser, dropped in this morning. She was asking for you. Busy times for us all.

TEODORO. That girl is too serious. She talks about marriage as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

DAMIAN. To you?

TEODORO. In such matters I make it a rule to follow the catechism: the sacraments in their proper order. Marriage comes seventh, after extreme unction.

DAMIAN. Good!

GUILLERMO. [*Laughing loudly*] Who would ever have thought of that?

DAMIAN. Unless it were yourself, Don Guillermo; only you do all your work in the dark. Do you know who has moved in across the street? Teresa, the corsetière.

TEODORO. A terrible bore. She reckons everything from the date of her mishap. "One year after," "Two years after"....

DAMIAN. What mishap was that?

TEODORO. Ah!

DAMIAN. Why! She's a slip of a child——

TEODORO. Exactly, a slip of a child.

GUILLERMO [*Laughing*] Ah! Ah! Clever!

DAMIAN. Now who would ever have thought of that?

GUILLERMO. Ready for anything! I envy that man; he will have his joke.

DAMIAN. We all know Don Teodoro.

GUILLERMO. I have no mind for such business, but if you could only put down everything that has happened to him, saints and martyrs, but you would have a book!

DAMIAN. It would be on the index expurgatorius.

TEODORO. Bring us the vermouths. [DAMIAN goes out.]

MENÉNDEZ. The town sports.

GARCÉS. Two of the boys.

TEODORO. I know that face. We must ask Damian.

MENÉNDEZ. But where is Don Paco? I am famished.

GARCÉS. He may find nobody at the Palace on a day like to-day.

MENÉNDEZ. It would be awful to leave without taking anything.

GARCÉS. Order what you like; the waiter knows us by this time. We might pay him to-morrow.

MENÉNDEZ. I'll have coffee and toast. The chocolate here is dreadful.

GARCÉS. Toast? An actress in a first-class company seen eating in public? Try something delicate. Take tea.

MENÉNDEZ. You can't fill me up on tea.

TEODORO. [*To GUILLERMO*] Hello! Who is that on the balcony?

GUILLERMO. She sees us.

TEODORO. Striking poses, eh? Look, there!... Feeding the canary sugar with her mouth. What a picture that would make!

GUILLERMO. It's a pity her husband is such a brute.

DAMIAN *re-enters with the orders.*

DAMIAN. The vermouth and bitters. What's the matter? Ah! The captain's wife! [*Mysteriously*] Every morning after he goes off to the barracks she comes out on the balcony and makes a signal—I don't know to whom, but it's to some one.

TEODORO. About what time?

DAMIAN. Between eight and nine.

TEODORO. I must get around some morning myself.

MENÉNDEZ. Look, look!... Don Paco, At last! [*Calling*] Don Paco!

GARCÉS. He sees us.

TEODORO. [*To DAMIAN*] Pst! Who are those people?

DAMIAN. Actors—the company that's opening at the theatre.

TEODORO. Ask her whether she was ever in Almendralejo and if her name is Luisa.

DAMIAN. Certainly, sir. In Almendralejo?

MENÉNDEZ. Who is that talking to Paco?

GARCÉS. That rascal, Moreno. He is making a strike. . . . Ha! He doesn't see us.

DAMIAN. [*To LA MENÉNDEZ*] Don't seem to notice, but that gentleman wants to know whether you were ever in Almendralejo, and if your name is Luisa.

MENÉNDEZ. [*Addressing TEODORO directly*] In Almendralejo? Did you see me there?

TEODORO. In eighty-four.

MENÉNDEZ. No, no, in ninety-two.

TEODORO. Right, in ninety-two. It was ninety-two, my dear Luisa!

MENÉNDEZ. My name isn't Luisa any more, but it is I. Holy Mother! But you have changed. I can't remember you at all.

TEODORO. You can't remember me?

MENÉNDEZ. Not at all.

TEODORO. Then I'll have to remind you.

MENÉNDEZ. [*Calling him over*] Do, do! I wish you would!

GUILLERMO. [*To DAMIAN*] This Teodoro! Clever!

DAMIAN. Now who would ever have thought of that?

PACO *enters*.

PACO. [*To GARCÉS*] I beg your pardon. I am sorry to have kept you waiting.

GARCÉS. What news? Good?

PACO. Splendid! The best. Who is that talking to Adela?

GARCÉS. Oh! Some old admirer. Adela! I beg your pardon.... Here is Don Paco.

MENÉNDEZ. Ah, Don Paco! What news?

GARCÉS. Good. The best! Nothing could be better.

MENÉNDEZ. Which?

GARCÉS. Nothing could be better than best.

MENÉNDEZ. [To PACO] Let me embrace you.

GARCÉS. Woman! Not on the public street! You mustn't let people see you embracing Don Paco, not if we are to appear here in that scandalous play. Have a little reserve.

MENÉNDEZ. What difference does it make? He's our manager. A manager isn't a man; he's like an author on a first night. You embrace him without meaning anything by it. [To DON TEODORO] This gentleman is our manager.

PACO. Delighted to meet you.

GUILLERMO. You must be a bold man, sir, to come here to present this objectionable play.

TEODORO. "*Obscurantismo*." We are anxious to see what it is like.

MENÉNDEZ. Why? Don't you think?....

TEODORO. I am afraid you are going to be disappointed and lose your money.

MENÉNDEZ. Ah, Don Paco! But you said you brought good news.

PACO. So I did. For the present the Governor will not prohibit the performance, as we feared.

GUILLERMO. But have you seen the Governor's wife? Wait till she hears of it.

TEODORO. Nothing is done here without her approval. She belongs to everything—all the ladies' clubs and all the church societies. She will never consent to her husband's prejudicing himself by permitting the performance of an objectionable play.

GUILLERMO. If you do give it, nobody will come to see you. Not even the official element.

TEODORO. You cannot count upon the ladies, and without the ladies you cannot count upon the men. A theatre without women is like—what shall I say?—like a jail without birds.

GARCÉS. An excellent comparison.

PACO. But the Governor cannot disobey the laws.

GUILLERMO. It is not necessary to disobey the laws. All he need do is to enforce all of them. The theatre has no fire protection, the gallery is falling down....

MENÉNDEZ. *Ay!* Don Paco! It's a death-trap!

TEODORO. Who asked you to come here with this "*Obscurantismo*," anyway?

GARCÉS. Well, sir, all I have to say then is that this town must have changed a great deal. I played an engagement here during the revolution when we had the republic, and there were a great many liberals here in those days. I remember particularly one Baldomero Remolinos—he was called Baldomero after General Espartero.

TEODORO. [*Laughing*] Will you listen to that?

GUILLERMO. Ha! Ha!

[*Laughing also.*]

GARCÉS. What is the matter?

GUILLERMO. Nothing is the matter. Why, this Baldomero to-day is the greatest magnate in Moraleda—he is the grand seignior. He pays what taxes he likes, holds mortgages on one-half of the province, has notes on the other half, and he would go into an apoplexy if he should so much as hear the sound of the revolutionary hymn.

GARCÉS. The "Hymn of Riego"? Is it possible?

MENÉNDEZ. He must be the man they were telling us about. Is he the father of a very spoiled girl?

GUILLERMO. Named Esperanza.

MENÉNDEZ. Who is madly in love with the Governor's secretary? And her parents won't let them marry?

TEODORO. Exactly.

PACO. In love with the Governor's secretary. With Don Manolo?

TEODORO. Yes. Do you know him? Keen as a razor—a young chap from Madrid?

PACO. Do I know him? Well, I should say so. Do I? Adela, Garcés, give me your hands. We are saved! We are the masters of Moraleda—yes, as much as Don Baldomero, more than the Governor, as much even as the Governor's wife.

MENÉNDEZ. Goodness! What has happened?

GARCÉS. Don't stop!

PACO. Nothing has happened, but Manolo, the Governor's secretary, is my brother.

MENÉNDEZ. Your brother?

GARCÉS. Bastard or legitimate?

PACO. How bastard? Leave off with your plays.

TEODORO. Well, upon my word!

GUILLERMO. And to think we were innocent! What a coincidence!

TEODORO. The early bird! It pays.

PACO. Imagine my surprise when I heard the name of my brother at the Palace—the last place I ever expected to find him. It is five years since we have seen each other—not since I sailed for Buenos Aires. We began earning our living so young.

MENÉNDEZ. But didn't you see him?

PACO. No, he was at the cathedral. But I dropped him a few lines, and I am expecting an answer.

GARCÉS. You parted good friends?

PACO. Naturally. If we haven't written for so long it was

...it was...well, why was it? Because that is the way we are made. When a man has to grapple with life for his bread, he forgets everything. Affection becomes a burden that bears him down.

GARCÉS. Talk of the theatre! There is a drama in this.

TEODORO. This puts another face on the matter. Now, with the support of your brother, you will make money.

MENÉNDEZ. [*To DON TEODORO*] God bless you!

TEODORO. Nothing can stop you. With Esperanza, the daughter of Don Baldomero, backed by her father and his money on the one hand, and the Governor's wife with her influence—for she has influence—and all the ladies' societies on the other, how can you help making money? Eh, Guillermo?

GUILLERMO. How can they help it?

TEODORO. Especially since your brother is so popular with the ladies—without offense to you, sir. He can do whatever he pleases.

PACO. No, no! No offense to me! Believe me, if I leave here with my pockets full of pesetas, there'll be no offense to me.

MENÉNDEZ. Nor to any of us.

GUILLERMO. Then don't trouble yourselves. If your brother protects you, you are sure to make money.

TEODORO. In this world and the next, so much is a question of skirts.

MENÉNDEZ.

“When lovely woman”....

GARCÉS. No more of your vaudeville stuff!

PACO. Adela, Garcés, I invite you to lunch to celebrate our good fortune. Gentlemen, will you join us?

TEODORO. Thank you, success. Good luck in Moraleda!

PACO. Happy to have met you, I am sure. [*To GARCÉS and LA MENÉNDEZ*] Pass into the restaurant.

GARCÉS. They are waiting for us at our boarding-house.

MENÉNDEZ. Oh, let them wait! What difference does it make? They will get used to it. Don Paco, I am hungry.

GARCÉS. Not on top of what you have just had?

MENÉNDEZ. What?

GARCÉS. And the sherry?

MENÉNDEZ. Yes, but after the bicarbonate....

PACO. We might sit by the window and enjoy the *paseo*. In this town it begins after high mass.

MENÉNDEZ. [*To GARCÉS*] Do you think we fooled him with those sandwiches?

GARCÉS. What sandwiches?

MENÉNDEZ. Go on and eat! Adios, Don Teodoro.

TEODORO. Adios, Luisa—I mean Adela.

PACO, GARCÉS and LA MENÉNDEZ *pass into the café.*

GUILLERMO. That was a discovery. We are in luck.

TEODORO. Nothing was wanting except the family portrait. The Governor's secretary, brother of a theatrical manager of a travelling troupe! What a scandal!

GUILLERMO. If the play is not performed, all the proprietors of the gambling-houses which have been closed by the Governor's order, will set up a howl in the name of liberty. If what they say about favoritism is true——

TEODORO. Of course it is. There is no playing anywhere except at Pedrosa's. And do you know why? Because Don Baldomero makes a fortune out of the rent, and he uses his influence with the Governor to prevent them from playing anywhere else. Haven't you seen the *Abejorro*? Here is the last number. It's tremendous!

He takes a handful of papers out of his pocket, and lets a letter drop.

GUILLERMO. Letters, eh?

TEODORO. Yes. You could never guess.... Here is the *Abejorro*.

GUILLERMO. Who the devil is behind this?

TEODORO. Reinoso, the proprietor of the *Recreo*. They have shut up his house. Listen: "In preparation for the feria several large candelabra have been placed in front of the Governor's Palace, in the worst possible taste. In view of the circumstances, it would seem that His Excellency might have chosen a less public occasion on which to turn on the light."

GUILLERMO. The devil you say! To turn on the light!

TEODORO. Wait! "In order to insure the greater success of the Bull-fight to-morrow, the Governor is to preside over the Plaza. In the interest of sport, it is to be hoped that the ignorance of His Excellency does not extend to all matters which take place under his eye." What do you think of that?

GUILLERMO. No, no, that is his business. I don't see the connection. A man may be a good governor....

TEODORO. And yet be afraid to turn on the light? It's not in the oath of office.

GUILLERMO. Hello! What's the crowd?

TEODORO. Campos, the bull-fighter, and the people shouting after him.

DAMIAN *enters*.

DAMIAN. Here comes Campos!

A crowd of men and boys run across the stage shouting
"Campos!" "Campos!"

MENÉNDEZ. [*Rising in her seat in the window*] What a figure! What jewels!

GARCÉS. Don't be a fool staring at that pocket gladiator. The brute has no soul.

PACO. Garcés, don't preach. Life is no old morality.

GARCÉS. No, this is art. . . . When we arrived, not even a beggar turned to look.

PACO. What sauce will you have? Mayonnaise?

GARCÉS. Mayonnaise or . . . Bordelaise. . . . [Yawns.

CAMPOS, REGUERA, PIMENTÓN, POLITO, and the MARQUIS OF TORRELODONES enter, surrounded by a crowd of hangers-on.

CAMPOS. [Bowing to the people] Thank you! To-morrow in the arena! Thank you, gentlemen. Adios! . . .

PIMENTÓN. Make room, boys.

TEODORO. Hello, Polito.

POLITO. Hello! Together again, eh? The combination?

GUILLERMO. We are waiting for the music.

POLITO. Won't you join us? Gentlemen, allow me to present my friends. [To CAMPOS] There is no need to present you.

TEODORO. Everybody knows Campos.

POLITO. Two inseparable companions—Don Teodoro Andújar and Don Guillermo Juncas, the Don Juan and Don Luis of Moraleda.

TEODORO. This Polito!

GUILLERMO. You must not libel us before these strangers.

POLITO. The Marquis of Torrelodones; Señor Reguera, a great lover of sport, who comes from Madrid especially to see Campos wipe out the impression he left here two years ago.

CAMPOS. You are joking, Don Leopoldo.

REGUERA. I should be sorry if he was not.

CAMPOS. Pay no attention to him.

REGUERA. We shall have fine sport this year.

TEODORO. Won't you take something? A cigar?

[Offering CAMPOS a cigar

REGUERA. He doesn't smoke.

POLITO. No, he doesn't smoke. It is bad for him.

CAMPOS. I don't smoke.

DAMIAN. Well, what will it be?

TEODORO. What will you have? [To CAMPOS] A drink?

REGUERA. He doesn't drink.

POLITO. No, he doesn't drink.

CAMPOS. I don't drink. You might bring me something mild.

POLITO. Something mild? [To REGUERA] What do you say to something mild? Will it hurt him?

REGUERA. Something mild? What do you think?

POLITO. I wonder.

CAMPOS. I am in your hands, gentlemen.

DAMIAN. We have lemon, sarsaparilla, fresh currant..

REGUERA. How about a little fresh currant?

POLITO. But at the normal temperature, without ice

TEODORO. You are in the hands of your friends.

POLITO. Beer and lime for us. And you, Marquis?

MARQUIS. The same.

PIMENTÓN. Bring me a glass of rose-water.

TEODORO. [To GUILLERMO] Epicures, these bull-fighters.
Currant, rose....

REGUERA. We shall have good bulls this year.

TEODORO. A novelty in the plaza.

CAMPOS. From the herd of the Marquis here present.

GUILLERMO. But hereafter?....

REGUERA. He comes with his eyes open to see the *corrida*.

MARQUIS. Oh, we all do that!

PIMENTÓN. What do you think of the little spotted fellow?
I noticed you looking him over.

REGUERA. I'd like to see you get after him.

PIMENTÓN. The Señor Marquis knows what I can do. I

am a good picador, eh, Señor Marquis? I do well by my friends. You have no reason to complain.

MARQUIS. No.

PIMENTÓN. Devil of a time we had with those bulls last year, pushing the horses up to them from behind, and then holding the damn beasts with one hand while we stuck the prod into them with the other. What more do you want? I know this isn't the same herd, but it belongs to the Señor Marquis. Well, what is there in it? When you want to make a herd look good, you know what you've got to do.

REGUERA. And we know what you do.

CAMPOS. Yes, and that will do, too.

PIMENTÓN. I was answering the Señor Marquis.

TEODORO. [*To POLITO*] By the way, that reminds me; is it nothing but bulls in these days of fiesta? How about the seven suits and twenty-two ties you promised to show us? What does Esperanza say? How goes your affair with the lady?

POLITO. The same as ever. The mother receives me very well, the father neither well nor ill, keeping an eye on the state of my bank-account, which he knows better than I do; but the girl cannot bear the sight of me even in a picture.

TEODORO. Is it true that she is in love with Don Manolito?

POLITO. Daft over him entirely. And since the Governor's wife has set herself to promote the match——

TEODORO. Then you don't believe what they say about her and....

POLITO. I believe that there exist between the Governor's wife and Don Manolito merely relations of—interest.

CAMPOS. Don Rosendo's shop is closed.

REGUERA. Do you need anything?

CAMPOS. Only some white ties. Joseliyo left mine out of my grip. He'll be forgetting my dinner-coat next.

POLITO. Oh! We can fix you up.

The church-bells ring.

GUILLERMO. The service is over. In a moment the promenade will begin and we shall have music. Is this your first visit to Moraleda?

MARQUIS. My first, yes. I find the place interesting, historically.

REGUERA. I was here once before with Rafael at another *corrida*.

MARQUIS. You devote yourself to the fashionable matador.

REGUERA. Well, one has got to go somewhere.

DON BASILIO *enters with* JIMENA *and* BELISA.

JIMENA. Did you expect us to stand and wait for the rest of the afternoon?

BELISA. You gave us a terrible fright.

BASILIO. But, my dears, didn't I tell you that His Reverence had sent for me to come to the sacristy? He wished to consult me about a matter of grave importance—the restoration of the tomb of the Giráldez family.

JIMENA. And all the while we were running about the altar, without being able to locate you anywhere!

BELISA. Afraid that something had happened to you.

JIMENA. Without daring to go home in such a crowd for fear of what people would think.

BASILIO. Why, what would people think?

BELISA. Don't deceive yourself. The very last thing they would think would be that we were looking for you.

JIMENA. You gave us such a shock!

BELISA. My nerves are all on edge.

JIMENA. Thank heaven! I caught myself. . . . I can control myself now, but in a week the reaction will be terrible!

BASILIO. But, my dears, it was nothing. You are un-

reasonable. Bah! You draw too much on your imaginations. Shall we sit down?

BELISA. No, let us take a turn through the plaza; we can rest later. We are ahead of the crowd.

TEODORO. [*Bowing*] Good morning, Don Basilio. Señoritas, good morning

DON BASILIO *and his daughters bow and pass out.*

GUILLERMO. The rector of the university and his daughters, Jimena and Belisa.

CAMPOS. Are those names or jokes?

TEODORO. They are no jokes. We call them Poetry and Rhetoric; the father afflicts the community with them both.

POLITO. They are thinking of marriage. They get no rest during the feria, when there are strangers in town.

CAMPOS. Whom have we here? A magnificent woman!

TEODORO. Most extraordinary! The Governor's wife.

MARQUIS. Yes, Josefina, and my daughter with her.

POLITO. And Esperanza Remolinos.

CAMPOS. Do you mean to tell me that woman is only a governor's wife? Why then do we have empires?

JOSEFINA, *the* MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES, DOÑA

O, ESPERANZA, DON BALDOMERO *and* MANOLO *enter.*

JOSEFINA. Look, Carmen, we are among friends. This is a reception! [*The men rise and bow*] How do you do?

TEODORO. [*To CAMPOS*] How is that for a *corrida*?

PIMENTÓN. A whole herd in herself!

MARQUIS. Are you on your way from the cathedral? How was the service?

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Divine! Everybody was there.

JOSEFINA. It was simply suffocating.

DOÑA O. You ought to have heard His Reverence. What a sermon!

BALDOMERO. It wasn't a sermon, it was a sensible discourse. How did you like it, Josefina?

JOSEFINA. Splendidly! I agreed with it in everything.

DOÑA O. I am so glad to hear you say so. Now it will be your duty to help us persuade your husband to stand with us and the decent people in the community upon the side of order and right.

JOSEFINA. Yes, that is true. But men do have their ideas—at least they have what they call their ideas. They have obligations. Santiago is not able to do whatever he pleases.

BALDOMERO. With us upon his side he will be able to do whatever he pleases. He can afford to snap his fingers at the government. The respectable element of Moraleda is solidly with us.

MANOLO. [*Aside*] I had better change the subject. [*Aloud*] Josefina almost fainted in the cathedral.

JOSEFINA. Oh, I had a dreadful quarter of an hour! Every eye was fixed upon me.

DOÑA O. You must have had a dreadful quarter of an hour.

BALDOMERO. What do you say to a stroll?

DOÑA O. No, indeed; I am too tired. Let us sit down here for a moment—that is, if you don't mind? [*To JOSEFINA.*

JOSEFINA. Certainly not. [*They seat themselves at a table.*

BALDOMERO. We shall rejoin you presently. My dear Marquis, what do you say to a stroll? After mass, the promenade is superb.

The MARQUIS and DON BALDOMERO go off to stroll.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. [*To CAMPOS*] I have picked the little mottled one for you; I felt certain that you would be pleased. Have you had time to look them over?

REGUERA. He'll try to make the best of it.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Leave it to me. You

are going to create such a sensation this year that hereafter you will never want to kill any bulls but papa's.

POLITO. [*To REGUERA*] The Marchioness knows.

REGUERA. I agree with her.

CAMPOS. I shall wear your cloak. I never intend to appear in it unless you are present.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Tell me, really, do you like it?

CAMPOS. Do I?

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. I made it myself; I did all the embroidery.

CAMPOS. I shall keep it to be buried in.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Heavens! Don't speak of such a thing! I want you to live and to kill many bulls.

REGUERA. [*To POLITO*] Bulls of papa's.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Naturally, people here are a little suspicious after that affair two years ago. You have very few admirers. But I get in a good word whenever I have an opportunity.

CAMPOS. So long as you are there, I don't care if they turn the whole herd loose in the plaza.

POLITO. The public admires *toreros* who get hurt.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. For heaven's sake, don't you think of such a thing—no matter what they admire.

REGUERA. No, better not. You must deny yourself.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Really, you must.

ESPERANZA. [*To MANOLO*] I'll tell you later. Mamma is looking, and you know what that means.

MANOLO. Aren't you coming to the Palace this evening to see the fireworks?

ESPERANZA. I hope so. Be careful! I don't want to displease mamma.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. [*Laughing loudly*] It seems to me I have heard that story before.

DOÑA O. [*To JOSEFINA*] What do you think of a woman who spends all her time flirting with a bull-fighter? She forgets she is not in Madrid, where everything goes.

JOSEFINA. But what can we do?

DOÑA O. She ought to remember with whom she is and behave accordingly.

MANOLO. [*To TEODORO and GUILLERMO*] Won't you take something? It was terribly hot in the cathedral.

TEODORO. Did His Reverence have much to say?

MANOLO. Yes, he was very eloquent.

GUILLERMO. We were discussing bulls and the Marquis's daughter.

PIMENTÓN. Antonio don't know what to do—take it from me! The poor fellow is done for. And he won't listen to any talk. Why, he can't even sign a paper unless the Marquis's bulls are scratched all over it! And what bulls! Just to show you: last year a shower came up at Salamanca; there was a puddle in the middle of the ring. The bull ran out, the people yelled—and the bull stuck his nose in the puddle.

[*All laugh.*]

The MARQUIS and DON BALDOMERO re-enter.

BALDOMERO. My dear Marquis, it is the old story. The province is rich, its resources are inexhaustible; but everything here is subordinated to Madrid. It is a calamity. This poor Santiago, with the best intentions in the world, can do nothing. Besides, between ourselves, his wife makes him ridiculous. Not that she is bad, but she is frivolous—educated in Madrid, and there you know everything is superficial. Ah! I beg your pardon; I forgot you were from Madrid.

MARQUIS. You will not find my daughter superficial; she

has been brought up in the English fashion, with plenty of physical exercise and languages. She can keep books. Her training has been practical. When I tell you that she manages the bulls, you can judge for yourself. And she handles the men, too. Yes, sir! They are all mad over her. So are the *toreros*.

JIMENA, BELISA and DON BASILIO *re-enter with the*
MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO *and* TERESA.

BASILIO. Apparently everybody has anticipated us.

DOÑA O. My dear Marchioness! And Teresita! This is a great pleasure. [*Greetings and kisses*] Do sit down.

ESPERANZA. Sit by me, Jimena. Here is a chair, Belisa.

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. And I shall sit by Josefina. We must conspire together, eh, Josefina? And with whom better? Now don't denounce me to your poor husband! I have not been in to see you since the beginning of the week. You have guests in the house, and I know what that means.

JOSEFINA. Yes, the Marquis and his daughter. I want you to meet them.

DOÑA O. If she ever gets through with that Campos.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Polito! You know everybody. Who are those women who just arrived?

POLITO. The Rector's daughters.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Poetry and Rhetoric? I know them; I mean the others.

POLITO. Oh! The Marchioness of Villaquejido and her daughter, Teresita.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. The girl who is going to be a nun?

POLITO. Her mother intends her to be one, and so as to fortify her against temptation, she is taking her about now

to show her life at first hand before she shuts her up in the cloister.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. An opportunity for them both. Under the pretext of bidding farewell to the world, they contrive to cut a few capers.

CAMPOS. A sort of combination benefit and farewell.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. I'd better leave you for a moment; I must speak to the ladies. They are beginning to whisper. If I don't look out they will say next that I run after the men. Just a moment, Campos. . . .

REGUERA. Don't you mind what they say.

CAMPOS. Do you know how this is likely to end? That girl will get my name into the papers.

ESPERANZA. Did you go very far?

JIMENA. Oh, there was such a crowd, we couldn't make any progress at all!

BELISA. For the present we gave up all hope.

JIMENA. It certainly did look hopeless to me.

BELISA. There are very few strangers in town this year.

JIMENA. The men here are so backward! All they think of is bulls. Look at Polito, look at Manuel. Why, they can't even get up courage to take the first step!

ESPERANZA. Do you know, I could have had them both?

JIMENA. That is easy to say.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. [*To TERESA*] When do you enter the convent?

TERESA. Mother is anxious for me to see the world first. I don't intend to be a saint through ignorance, as says Santa Teresa. I want to know life. As it was written of Saint Francis: "Among sinners he seemed to be one."

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. How familiar you are with the lives of the saints!

TERESA. Oh, I know them backward! But you ought to see me dance *sevillanas*.

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. Don Baldomero, Don Basilio, listen to me. I call you all to witness. Josefina promises us solemnly that she will do everything in her power to prevent her husband from consenting to the performance of this objectionable play.

ALL. Bravo! Bravo!

JOSEFINA. I will do my best. But Santiago, perhaps, may have something to say.

DOÑA O. Then appeal to his conscience. That should be our last resort. Vice cannot be suffered to prevail in Moraleda.

BALDOMERO. We cannot fail if we stand together.

TEODORO. [To MANOLO] A conspiracy.

MANOLO. So I see.

GUILLERMO. And what do you say as secretary? Shall we have "*Obscurantismo*"? How about the Governor?

MANOLO. He awaits instructions from Madrid.

TEODORO. But man, a government that pretends to be liberal!

MANOLO. There might be trouble; you know these people.

GUILLERMO. Some actors were just here from the company.

TEODORO. With their manager. He seemed to know you.

MANOLO. To know me?

TEODORO. Yes. He is from Madrid.

GUILLERMO. You must have been pretty intimate, for he is relying upon your influence.

MANOLO. Do you remember his name?

TEODORO. No, but he is lunching in the café—in the window. Do you see the lady's hat? You can see him. . . .

MANOLO. I'll take a look when I get a chance. I can't imagine. A manager from Madrid? . . .

TEODORO [To DON GUILLERMO] Now for the surprise.

GUILLERMO. Look innocent.

TEODORO. Yes. I say, Polito . . . no, it's a secret . . .

The band begins to play.

DOÑA O. Agreed! Then it is all arranged.

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. What a surprise this will be for His Reverence!

BALDOMERO. It is a triumph! Bravo, Josefina! You are a woman of courage.

DOÑA O. The true Christian woman!

BASILIO. Our Joan of Arc!

PACO. [*Discovering MANOLO*] Ah! Manolo!

MANOLO. Paco!

MENÉNDEZ. [*Jumping up*] Your brother?

PACO. Embrace me!

He tries to climb through the window.

MANOLO. [*Holding him back and endeavoring to force him down*] No, no! Wait! They might see us. Later . . . You don't know who these people are.

Great animation. All talk at the same time.

Curtain

THE SECOND ACT

Reception-hall in the Governor's Palace. Two large balconies at the rear. The table and chairs are strewn with ladies' hats, wraps, and other garments. A CLERK and DON SANTIAGO in conversation.

SANTIAGO. Where is Don Trino? Why don't you send me Don Trino? How is this? What are these things doing here?

CLERK. I don't know, Your Excellency. I was at service at the cathedral during the morning.

SANTIAGO. So? That will do for to-day. Send me Don Trino. [*Ironically to himself*] A good government! A pretty government!

JOSEFINA *enters*.

JOSEFINA. Are you making an address for the opposition?

SANTIAGO. I?

JOSEFINA. You were just saying "A good government! A pretty government!"

SANTIAGO. Never mind about the government; the government can take care of itself. Where am I to sit? Where am I to write? [*To the CLERK*] Send me Don Trino.

JOSEFINA. Don Trino? He is busy doing something for me.

SANTIAGO. Oh! That will do for to-day.

The CLERK goes out.

JOSEFINA. I asked him to decorate the table for the refreshments.

SANTIAGO. But, Josefina! A man in his position, a public servant—

JOSEFINA. He offered himself. In such matters he really has very good taste.

SANTIAGO. Well, have the clerks set the table, cover the furniture, yes, and sew on the machine, too, if they want to, only do me the favor to remove these things from the chairs.

JOSEFINA. Have a little patience; Carmen is unpacking her trunks. Besides, I had to empty the armoires to make room for my new gowns from Madrid. We spread everything out so as to get a good look at it. You know how upsetting it is to have guests in the house. These old buildings are absolutely without conveniences.

SANTIAGO. But where am I to receive visitors?

JOSEFINA. Oh, you annoy me! [Ringing.]

The CLERK enters.

CLERK. Did you ring?

JOSEFINA. Yes. Ask the Marchioness's maid to come down. And tell Don Trino that if he runs short of carnations, there are two bunches waiting for him on my dressing-table.

CLERK. Certainly. [The CLERK goes out.]

JOSEFINA. The maid will pick up for you.

SANTIAGO. Phew! But it's hot. I wish I didn't have to wear this frock coat.

JOSEFINA. Why don't you take it off? Nobody will be in before evening.

SANTIAGO. But, wife, I have to write to the Prime Minister.

The MAID enters.

MAID. What does madame wish?

JOSEFINA. Pick up these things. How is the Marchioness this afternoon?

MAID. She is dressing for the reception.

SANTIAGO. Goodness! Tell her it isn't a reception—just a few friends dropping in to see the fireworks from the balcony.

MAID. That makes no difference. After six the Marchioness always wears an evening-gown, in the English fashion, sir.

SANTIAGO. Well, if that is the case——

MAID. The only difference is that if it is an informal affair, she wears a high neck, but if it is public, of course, the neck is cut low.

JOSEFINA. Of course, Santiago, of course. [*The MAID withdraws*] You ought to be ashamed of yourself to be taking lessons from a maid.

SANTIAGO. But how was I to know? Who would ever have supposed that in public it would be cut low?

JOSEFINA. I wish you would keep your eyes open, Santiago.

SANTIAGO. Just as you say, my dear. Oh! You don't know how I feel!

JOSEFINA. What is the matter?

SANTIAGO. I have sent word to Madrid but they refuse to answer anything definite—generalities, that is all. They say that I am in a better position than they are to appreciate the conditions; that the government lacks knowledge of the local situation.

JOSEFINA. Why do you have to ask the government what to do? They will think that you are a fool, and they will be right, too. Can't you make up your own mind? The first thing that a man needs in order to fill an office of importance is character, and to have character is to do whatever one thinks is right, no matter what comes of it. If it turns out to be wrong, all the more reason for sticking to it.

SANTIAGO. Then I will——

JOSEFINA. Do what? What is it you are going to do?

SANTIAGO. Comply with the law.

JOSEFINA. Comply with the law? Don't talk nonsense. You don't mean to say you have authorized the performance of that horrible play?

SANTIAGO. There wasn't any way out of it. The posters are up for the first performance already.

JOSEFINA. With your consent?

SANTIAGO. Why not?

JOSEFINA. After having heard what His Reverence said this morning? After all the leading citizens of Moraleda have come to you in face of this onslaught and joined hands to form a dike——

SANTIAGO. Come down out of the pulpit, my dear; it isn't your sphere. My duty is not to please a faction, however large—no, not if it included everybody. My duty is to obey the law.

JOSEFINA. Very well, then. Do as you see fit. I knew that sooner or later you would succeed in making yourself ridiculous. You will go out of office in disgrace, discredited as a politician or as anything else.

SANTIAGO. Josefina, what conception have you of the law? They can say what they like, but women possess only the rudiments of moral sense. It is much less highly developed with them than with us.

JOSEFINA. That may be, but we possess plenty of common sense, which is a thing that you haven't any idea of. What did your uncle say to me when I went to him to ask him to recommend you to the ministry for the position which you now hold, because you were too inefficient to earn your own living—our situation at that time could not possibly have been worse—what did he say to me? “Undeceive yourself, Josefina. Poor Santiago is no good. He will never amount

to anything. If he goes into office on horseback like Don Quixote, he will come out of it on an ass like Sancho Panza." And your uncle was a prophet. He knew what he was talking about.

SANTIAGO. My dear wife, Josefina, let us not disturb the peace of our home, even though it be a governor's house—temporarily—by questions of politics. They ought never to cloud the brow of a creature so fair as yourself—you, for whom I have toiled, although I never was ambitious, for whom I would strive, yes, and fight with all my might, not only in a governorship of the second class, but, upon a throne, if I had one, to seat you beside me in ermine.

JOSEFINA. Upon a throne? How long do you suppose you would stay there?

SANTIAGO. You are lovely, you are beautiful; do not forget that, my dear. Don't you think that with such a wife a governor might be pardoned something, even if his ideas are a little advanced?

JOSEFINA. Don't advance, Santiago! For heaven's sake, don't advance! And stop talking nonsense. This is a serious matter.

SANTIAGO. That is precisely the reason I don't intend to have you meddle in it.

JOSEFINA. So? That is what I am to you, is it? In the serious affairs of life, I am a meddler? I have no voice? I am not your wife, your equal; I am a butterfly, a toy who cares for nothing but frivolity? This is the consideration I receive after so many years of sacrifice, after all the privations I have endured for you!

SANTIAGO. Josefina! My dear!

JOSEFINA. At least you cannot say that my eyes were not open when I married you. I had no illusions about your future. When I first met you, you were the last person in

the world that any one would have fallen in love with, with that old green coat you used to wear—I can see it now—and twenty-five pesetas a week in the Court of Claims. Didn't my parents take me away for a whole summer to Escorial so that I could get you out of my head? But I could not. No, I was young and foolish then, and I loved you, I loved you out of pity like...like...Desdemona loved Othello!

SANTIAGO. I know, Josefina, I know. If I ever doubted for one moment, if I have ever ceased to merit your affection——

JOSEFINA. I remember the first present I ever gave you—half a dozen linen pocket-handkerchiefs to replace that old cotton towel you used to carry and pull out whenever you had a cold. *Ay!* How it used to mortify me! And in those days you always had a cold.

SANTIAGO. I know, my dear, I know. You were so thoughtful, so providing....

JOSEFINA. And after we were married, in times of trial and privation, who was it who was the first to economize, to cut herself down? I was. Didn't we go for whole months without a maid, without any servant in the house whatever? And I was laundress and cook, and I helped you translate *feuilletons* from the French, although they might better have been left untranslated, and I made all my clothes for two years myself so as to appear decently and spend as little upon them as possible, and made them all alike so that nobody could tell when I had new ones, though I never had any, and the worst that you ever heard me say in all that time was that another man in your place would have acted differently, that he wouldn't have been a good-for-nothing, that he would not have behaved himself like an ass! But you never heard me complain. And now you repay all my sacrifices by telling me that I cannot understand anything

serious, that I am a woman without judgment, without character——

SANTIAGO. What I said was——

JOSEFINA. You treat me like a *cocotte*.

SANTIAGO. Wife! I never treated such a person in my life.

JOSEFINA. As soon as a woman ceases to be honorable, everybody begins to blame her. Her husband is the first!

SANTIAGO. Naturally.

JOSEFINA. Why are women so foolish as to be honest? Why, oh, why do we love? How often you see a woman who has thrown herself away upon a man who hasn't the remotest idea what to do with her! What is the use?

SANTIAGO. This number was not on the programme of the feria.

JOSEFINA. And yet you talk of being serious! What you do, that is serious; what you do, that is dignified! Is it dignified to be false to your promises? To be a traitor to your friends, to those who support and defend you? And when all they ask of you is a trifle!

SANTIAGO. A trifle? To break the law, to violate the constitution? Are those trifles?

JOSEFINA. You evade me. To leave me publicly exposed after what happened in the cathedral this morning—is that a trifle? The petitions of all the ladies' societies, the requests of our friends, the Solars, the Villaquejidos, the Remolinos, the Peribáñezs, everybody——

SANTIAGO. Everybody? Yes, the whole world, the universe! That is what makes me angry. Who are these people that they should set themselves up to dictate to me? It is a pretty sign of morality when all the rogues begin to moralize. Don Baldomero Remolinos shocked by a comedy? Think of it! As if every one didn't remember that he opened his first shop to the tune of the "Hymn of Riego," and what

a shop it was!—a counter of decayed vegetables, which was all that he had until he got the contract to furnish meals for the jail. In those days, let me tell you, no one ever thought of committing a crime. No, sir! The provisions of Don Baldomero inspired a terror more salutary than all the penalties of the code.

JOSEFINA. You don't mean to say that you believe all those stupidities? It seems incredible. Lies, calumnies invented by the rabble, yes, by the very people you want to pander to now with a spectacle debased to their taste. You want to win their applause, to appear popular; but you have not reckoned upon one thing—I shall not stand by you in this humiliation. I am going to Madrid this very night! To Madrid!

SANTIAGO. Are you crazy?

JOSEFINA. Do you think I can face the reproaches, the contempt of my friends, the scorn of everybody?

SANTIAGO. I wouldn't worry myself so much about everybody. Does everybody consist of the few persons who possess the honor of introductions to you?

JOSEFINA. Everybody is everybody, and it is too late for you to change it. You want to set yourself up as a tribune of the people. Very well! But you need not expect me to be present at your funeral. When they throw you out of office, and they won't hesitate to do it, when you slink away in dishonor, hooted at, disgraced, then you will remember who gave you advice; then you will see that it was your wife who had your interests at heart. And to think that you should be dreaming of a governorship of the first class!

SANTIAGO. Dreaming? I'd be satisfied if I could get a chance to sleep! My head will go round for a week.

JOSEFINA. This is not a laughing matter. I am going to get ready—to-night!

SANTIAGO. But, my dear. . . . Impossible!

JOSEFINA. There is only one way to prevent it.

SANTIAGO. I am your husband, Josefina.

JOSEFINA. Yes, and I suppose you would like to demonstrate your force of character upon me? That would be too much. No, no! I am going! I am going. . . .

SANTIAGO. But, wife! Josefina! In the midst of the feria? Don't create a scandal. Reflect.

JOSEFINA. Conscience dictates, Santiago; it never reflects. You are the one to reflect.

SANTIAGO. In the name of all the saints, tell me what it is that you wish me to do. I will consider, I will reflect, I will consult—with everybody! If there is a way out of this dilemma, without breaking the law——

JOSEFINA. You will consult? Yes! With persons of ability, of judgment, I suppose? I can tell you this: they will say precisely the same thing that I do. We shall see how many it takes to make up your mind. Won't it be pleasant for me to have everybody boasting that they could turn you around their little finger and I couldn't? Won't it be pleasant for me?

SANTIAGO. If it was not for you, do you suppose that I would hesitate for one moment? It is only for you that I search and pray, yes, pray, that there may be some legal way to violate the law, for we are in Spain, thank God, and there must be one. But don't talk about going to Madrid and don't cry! Don't reproach me. Look! Your hair is falling down, and you have crumpled your dress.

JOSEFINA. What do I care about my dress? I am not thinking about my clothes. Why do I wear clothes anyway? So that you may look decently and present a proper appearance before the people. For the very same reason that I used to put on my apron and go down into the kitchen, and do whatever there was to be done about the house.

SANTIAGO. I know, my dear, I know. And there never

were such meals as when you, with your own royal hands, prepared our simple fare.

JOSEFINA. Really? Do you mean it? Then Governor's wife that I am, I shall put on my apron and go down into the kitchen, and bring back again those happy days.

SANTIAGO. So much happier, so much more tranquil than now!

JOSEFINA. What is the use of poetizing at a distance? You forget the disappointments, the humiliations, the black hours that we went through in Madrid. And I want you to remember them and to keep them always in mind, so as to frighten you out of the danger of losing in a moment what it has cost us so many years to attain.

SANTIAGO. It is true. There were black hours.

JOSEFINA. And who encouraged you? Who animated you? Who always gave you advice?

SANTIAGO. You, you! You always gave me advice. You are right. I don't know how I came to be so foolish as to displease you. I'll do whatever you wish, without consulting anybody. Does that satisfy you? Now do I appreciate you at your true worth? Now do I deserve your love?

JOSEFINA. Yes, yes! Now you do! And you will see that I know how to reward you. I am satisfied. How easy it is to satisfy me!.... Embrace me. Ah! Again.... How good you are at heart, and how I love you!

SANTIAGO. It is so long since you have embraced me—not since my inauguration.

JOSEFINA. Nonsense! Since your inauguration? Suppose somebody should hear you say that!

SANTIAGO. I mean a real, spontaneous embrace. Well, my dear, I will see what I can do. *[He rings.]*

JOSEFINA. Yes, at once.

SANTIAGO. But I must legalize the blow. *[The CLERK*

enters] Send me Don Trino. Tell him to drop whatever he is doing and come immediately. [*The CLERK goes out*] If there is a riot, if the people rise against me, let him who is without a wife cast the first stone.

JOSEFINA. What is the use of talking about riots? The people are like women. They need a man of character to dominate them, by force if necessary.

SANTIAGO. Why didn't you begin with that proposition?

JOSEFINA. You'll be saying next that you never do anything but what I tell you; that I am the real Governor.

SANTIAGO. No, no! What have I to say anyway? Let us not begin another discussion.

DON TRINO *enters*.

TRINO. What does the señora wish?

SANTIAGO. It is not the señora, this time it is I. Sometimes it has to be I. Sit down.

TRINO. If it is nothing very urgent, sir, I should like to finish the shield and the towers——

SANTIAGO. What shield and what towers?

TRINO. The coat of arms of the province, sir, which I am constructing entirely of flowers—to be placed in the middle of the table at the supper this evening, Your Excellency's initials on one side and those of your worthy spouse on the other. Very beautiful, sir, very beautiful!

JOSEFINA. Did you do all that yourself, Don Trino? It is a pity to put you to so much trouble.

TRINO. If one possesses talent, señora, it is his duty to display it when occasion requires. You have guests to-night from Madrid, and I am anxious that they should see that here, too, we are lovers of art.

SANTIAGO. Sit down, Don Trino. I shall be ready to dictate in a moment. Then you can finish the towers.

JOSEFINA. It won't detain you long.

SANTIAGO. Yours is the only handwriting that is legible in the house.

TRINO. True, Your Excellency, though self-praise does not become me, but the seventy-two governors who have occupied the Palace during the twenty years I have lived in it, have always valued my services highly. I say nothing of their wives, who continually send me presents. When it comes to a question of repairing umbrellas, or mending china, or any little handiness about the house, or entertaining the children with the latest toys, or preparing a special kind of starch for the wash, a secret which I had from some nuns, who as a particular favor passed it on to an aunt of mine, who brought me up, a sister of my father, sir, who is now in glory, God keep him, sir——

SANTIAGO. Don Trino, this is a very urgent matter.

TRINO. I beg your pardon, but since the señora was listening with such interest. . . .

JOSEFINA. I? I was thinking of something else.

TRINO. You will never find me backward with the pen.

SANTIAGO. Don't construct so many bouquets for yourself.

TRINO. As you say, sir. Ah! before I forget it; the refreshments——

JOSEFINA. What is the matter? Haven't they come?

TRINO. *Sí, señora.* But the fact is they were ordered from the Café of the Four Nations——

SANTIAGO. As is usual.

TRINO. I beg your pardon. As is usual during liberal administrations, for the proprietor is a leading liberal; but during conservative administrations the order is always placed with the Café de Europa, whose proprietor is a conservative, and he has taken great offense, in my judgment with good reason, sir, for he has made many sacrifices for the party

SANTIAGO. I didn't know that when I gave the order.

JOSEFINA. Of course, you didn't know—as is usual!

SANTIAGO. Come, come! Let us not begin another discussion over refreshments.

TRINO. I hope not, sir. With your permission—although without consulting you—I knew I might count upon your approval—I have effected a compromise. I have ordered the ices from the Café of the Four Nations, and the creams from the Café de Europa, so that in this way I have established a precedent, for in my opinion, sir, subject to your approval, a political question ought not to be made out of the serving of ice-cream. You will dictate when you are ready, sir.

DON SANTIAGO *begins to dictate. Voices outside.*

JOSEFINA. Who is coming at this hour?

ESPERANZA *enters.*

JOSEFINA. So early, my dear? And alone?

ESPERANZA. [*Weeping, flinging herself into the arms of JOSEFINA*] Oh, Josefina! I am utterly miserable!

JOSEFINA. What is the matter with you?

SANTIAGO. What has happened? [*To DON TRINO*] Just a moment, just a moment....

JOSEFINA. Have you had another tiff with papa and mamma?

ESPERANZA. I have no papa, I have no mamma, I have nobody in all the world, but you!

SANTIAGO. My child!....

JOSEFINA. Nonsense! Up to her old tricks.

TRINO. [*To DON SANTIAGO, who pays no attention to him*] If you don't mind, sir, if you don't mind, I think I might finish the shield and the towers....

SANTIAGO. [*Absorbed*] Yes, yes.... Of course!

DON TRINO *goes out.*

SANTIAGO. [*To ESPERANZA*] But what is the trouble? How is it that you are alone?

ESPERANZA. I am not alone; the maid brought me. And I am going to stay with you forever! Our house is worse than the Inquisition.

JOSEFINA. No, Esperanza——

SANTIAGO. If we didn't know better, we might think you were one of the martyrs.

ESPERANZA. How little outsiders can tell! Papa has done nothing all day but buy me presents.

JOSEFINA. Horrible!

ESPERANZA. Yes, I knew you would laugh at me. Whenever papa buys me presents, it is because he means to do something unpleasant, and he wants to get me into good humor beforehand.

JOSEFINA. Have you found out what it is that he is going to do?

ESPERANZA. Have I? This afternoon he called me into his study, and he said to me, he said to me——

JOSEFINA. Go on.

ESPERANZA. "Esperanza, my dear daughter"—whenever papa calls me his dear daughter, it is always because he means to do something unpleasant—"my dear daughter, I would not for the world displease you in anything."

JOSEFINA. Of course not.

ESPERANZA. Wait! "Do you love Polito or do you love Manolo? Decide. Choose for yourself and let us not have any more of this coquetry, playing off one against the other and making both yourself and your parents ridiculous."

SANTIAGO. There is some sense in what he says.

ESPERANZA. Is there any sense in his telling me to make up my mind without anybody's giving me any advice, without its being anything to anybody whether I am unhappy afterward or not for the rest of my life? Then if I complain, they will say: "You did it yourself; it was your own fault."

SANTIAGO. That would be a predicament.

JOSEFINA. Between ourselves, which do you prefer? Polito or Manolo?

ESPERANZA. How can I tell?

JOSEFINA. Did you leave word that you were coming with mamma?

ESPERANZA. That would have been a nice thing to do! You should have seen the state mamma was in when she heard that Don Santiago had given permission for the performance of the play.

SANTIAGO. You don't say so? But if I. . . . That reminds me. Don Trino! Where is Don Trino? [*He rings. The CLERK enters*] Send me Don Trino. [*The CLERK goes out.*]

JOSEFINA. What did your mother say?

ESPERANZA. Oh, you will find out soon enough! The Marchioness saw the posters in the street, so she knew that you had broken your promise, and His Reverence has given orders to find out who is responsible, so as to fix the blame, and the ladies are all angry, so nobody is coming to the reception this evening, and when they pass you on the street they are going to cut you as if they didn't know you at all.

JOSEFINA. [*To SANTIAGO*] Now see what you have done! Didn't I tell you? We are in a nice fix. But, if this should not be so, if it is all a mistake? [*To SANTIAGO*] Leave me! Don't speak to me! I shall write at once to the Marchioness and explain everything. [*She seats herself at the desk and begins to write. To SANTIAGO*] And you! Why don't you give that order? Do you want me to do it myself?

SANTIAGO. That would be the last straw. At once! Don Trino! Don Trino! I suppose I shall have to find him. . . .

[*DON SANTIAGO goes out.*]

JOSEFINA. [*Without looking up*] What did the Marchioness say? Was she much put out?

ESPERANZA. Was she? I was so sorry for you, Josefina. You know how I love you.

JOSEFINA. I know, my dear.

ESPERANZA. And it isn't your fault, is it, if your husband will do what he pleases?

JOSEFINA. Certainly not. What can you do with a man anyway? You will find out when you get married. They do whatever they like. Pardon a moment. . . .

[She continues to write.]

The MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES enters.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Hello, Esperancita! I am all dressed. Isn't mamma coming to see the fireworks?

ESPERANZA. I don't know.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Do you expect many people, Josefina?

JOSEFINA. I couldn't say. Pardon, I shall be done in a moment. . . .

ESPERANZA. Probably nobody will come.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Nobody! Heavens! What is the complication? Anything new? The trouble about the theatre?

JOSEFINA and ESPERANZA both speak at the same time.

JOSEFINA. Another blunder of Santiago's. Imagine——

ESPERANZA. A mistake of the Marchioness's who has muddled up everything——

JOSEFINA. Without realizing what he was doing, he gave permission——

ESPERANZA. And the Marchioness says that Josefina has been false to her word——

JOSEFINA. And so nobody is coming this evening.

Meanwhile DON SANTIAGO has re-entered, preparing to resume the dictation, but because of the conversation he is unable to proceed.

SANTIAGO. If you will be so kind. . . . Just a moment. . . .
Let me see, where were we?

TRINO. What is this? I didn't write this.

SANTIAGO. Give it to me. [*Reading*] "My dear Marchioness, I hasten to apologize". . . . [*To the others*] And on the other side my letter to the Ministry! Josefina, this mixing of public and private business is intolerable. [*To DON TRINO*] Come with me.

JOSEFINA. No, no, we had better go. Don't tear up that letter; I will copy it.

SANTIAGO. No, let him copy the despatch

JOSEFINA. Couldn't you have given the order without saying anything about it to the Ministry?

SANTIAGO. Yes, it is more important to make explanations to the Marchioness. Copy the despatch, Don Trino.

TRINO. [*With politesse*] The señora may take the letter if she wishes; I remember perfectly the terms of the despatch.

SANTIAGO. Here, take it. [*To JOSEFINA*] I beg your pardon, Carmen; but these festivals. . . . What a festival!

JOSEFINA. And all because you lack character!

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. These provincials are impossible. Give me Madrid.

JOSEFINA. Talk about liberty! You can do what you please there.

ESPERANZA. When I get married I am going straight to Madrid.

JOSEFINA, *the* MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES *and*
ESPERANZA *go out, conversing busily.*

SANTIAGO. What can you do with a woman anyway?

TRINO. Women are the gentler sex, sir. We pass agreeable moments with them, but when it comes to business—Let me see. Where did we leave off? [*Reading*] "In a frightful commotion". . . .

SANTIAGO. That's it. "In a frightful commotion"....
[Dictating] A strenuous protest was registered—

DON BALDOMERO *enters*.

BALDOMERO. Señor Don Santiago!

SANTIAGO. Don Baldomero! My friend! To what am I indebted for this honor?

BALDOMERO. Is Esperanza with you?

SANTIAGO. Yes; that is.... Did you wish to see her?

BALDOMERO. No, no! Go on, go on....

SANTIAGO. Not before him! [To DON TRINO] Wait in the study; I shall be with you in a moment.

TRINO. The wine is in the study, sir.

SANTIAGO. Then dispose of it at once. [DON TRINO *goes out*] At your service, Don Baldomero.

BALDOMERO. At my service, Don Santiago, at my service! Perhaps you will explain to me first whether to juggle with your promises, to be false to your word is to be at my service?

SANTIAGO. Calm yourself and everybody as my wife says, Don Baldomero. At this moment I am sending a despatch to the ministry, prefacing it at the same time by a telegram, announcing the prohibition of "*Obscurantismo*."

BALDOMERO. Then how is it that they have posted the bills? Why are they selling tickets at the box-office? For they are selling tickets. On my way here I saw the line myself.

SANTIAGO. Is there a line? I thought you said nobody would go?

BALDOMERO. There is a line, that is true; but of what people!

SANTIAGO. The fact is, I did issue a permit. Now, if it is withdrawn you are responsible—you and your friends. I shall resign my office into the hands of the captain-general. Oh, if it were only so easy to resign one's wife!

BALDOMERO. I should not think of such a thing. The law-abiding element is solidly with you.

SANTIAGO. That may be, but the art of government consists in having with you the non-law-abiding element.

BALDOMERO. Let me tell you, Don Santiago, wit in a governor is entirely out of place. Where is your secretary, Don Manolo? Hasn't he come to-day?

SANTIAGO. I don't know. I will see. [*He rings.*]

BALDOMERO. He is a man it is well to keep an eye on.

The CLERK enters.

SANTIAGO. Has Don Manolo come in?

CLERK. I think so, sir. He was just here with a strange gentleman.

SANTIAGO. Tell him that Don Baldomero would like to see him. [*The CLERK goes out*] You say that he is a man it is well to keep an eye on? I suppose because he is paying attention to your daughter? I might warn you that at present his prospects are not very bright; his position is a humble one. But he is honest, industrious——

BALDOMERO. I am delighted to know your opinion.

SANTIAGO. You will find him extremely handy about the house.

BALDOMERO. So I understand from your wife.

SANTIAGO. Yes, of course. Ah! Here he comes.

MANOLO enters.

MANOLO. Gentlemen——

BALDOMERO. My dear Manolito! Come to me. You know how highly I value your abilities.

MANOLO. I know, sir.

SANTIAGO. Don Baldomero wishes to speak with you. I have this business to attend to.

MANOLO. About the theatre?

SANTIAGO. Yes. Absolute prohibition! It is necessary to show character.

MANOLO. Prohibition?

BALDOMERO. Yes, man, yes. Prohibition!

SANTIAGO. [*Alarmed*] Why, don't you think. . . . Doesn't it seem to you. . . .

MANOLO. No, no, I don't think. You have reasons of your own, no doubt. At your disposition, Don Baldomero.

BALDOMERO. Sit down, my son; sit down.

MANOLO. [*Aside to DON SANTIAGO*] How affable!

SANTIAGO. [*To MANOLO*] You are making progress. He wants to speak with you alone. What luck! Pardon me. . . .

[DON SANTIAGO *retires*.

MANOLO. How is it that after having given permission, he now retracts it? That will put him in a pretty position.

BALDOMERO. If I were you, I wouldn't concern myself about it. You are not responsible—especially since you won't be here when the performance takes place.

MANOLO. I won't be here?

BALDOMERO. No, as you are going away beforehand.

MANOLO. I? Going away? Who told you so?

BALDOMERO. Nobody. I am telling you. You are going because I wish it, because it is not convenient for me to have you stay.

MANOLO. You are not speaking seriously.

BALDOMERO. It is necessary to be frank with you; for that reason I speak seriously.

MANOLO. Do you mean to tell me——

BALDOMERO. It is the simplest thing in the world. All you have to do is to resign your position, upon any pretext which may occur to you at the moment, pack your trunk, and return by the first train to Madrid.

MANOLO. Because you wish it? Because you tell me to?

BALDOMERO. Not at all. Because it is for your best interests to do so, because in that way you will avoid unpleas-

antness. You know, my dear Manolo, I have always had your welfare at heart.

MANOLO. Now you are sympathizing with me.

BALDOMERO. You are so young, you have so few friends, that, naturally I sympathize with you.

MANOLO. I see. I think I divine the motive of your solicitude without further explanation. I cannot deny that I have paid some attention to your daughter. Whether or not she has responded sufficiently to justify you in rising up in your pride as a potentate, or in your affection as a father, I am not at present in a position to determine; but however great my presumption may have been in laying eyes upon that young lady, inasmuch as I am not your servant, nor your debtor in any particular, I am unable to see in just what way you purpose to enforce this decree of banishment, however great a personage you may be in Moraleda, without any other authority than your own say-so.

BALDOMERO. To a man of my years, my son, boasting sounds idle and vain. Had I wished, there are a thousand ways in which I might have caused your departure, without your so much as suspecting one of them; but I could not bring myself to employ them in the case of one of whom I was so fond. But when I say to you directly, face to face, "I want you to go away," I say it as counsel, I say it as advice. If you prefer, Don Santiago will say it as a command.

MANOLO. Through your advice?

BALDOMERO. For the sake of his own reputation. When you say that you owe me nothing, you forget that there are a thousand ways in which a man may incur obligation—papers which may pass from hand to hand, compromising documents which may perhaps be brought to light.

MANOLO. Compromising documents? In your possession?

BALDOMERO. Don't be a fool. You know Reinosá, the

manager of the Circle? Well, his place was running until last night, when some one brought word to the Governor that his order to close the house had not been complied with. He had continued playing because he had understood that he was within his rights; he had received a letter——

MANOLO. Eh? Have you that letter?

BALDOMERO. Don't you see? That letter served as a guarantee, a receipt for a certain sum of money, and it has come into my possession. Unless you take steps to prevent it, it will presently come into that of Don Santiago. I know this letter is not signed by you, although it is directed to you, and by a person who, by addressing you in such connection, gives ample evidence of the esteem in which you are held by her; I know you will say that it is a great deal to ask you to leave Moraleda in exchange for a letter, but in order to placate Reinosá, whose casino is closed in spite of the guarantee, I understand that you have paid a visit to a certain club of which I am landlord and honorary president, and I wish to inform you that even suppose they do gamble there——

MANOLO. They do. There is no supposition about that.

BALDOMERO. Even if they do, let me tell you, they know what they are doing, they are of full age, and it calls for no interference from you. We are not all equally influential, young man, though you may not realize it, and whether pretending to the hand of my daughter, or pretending to put me before the community in a contemptible light as the proprietor of a gambling-hell——

MANOLO. Pardon any pretense upon my part. So long as I supposed that family reasons, which I respect, prompted this behavior, I remained silent; but now that it appears to have also its business side, that puts another face upon the matter. Do as you see fit with that letter, but let me tell

you, if you do not happen to remember how a gentleman should behave, I happen to remember very well how to treat persons who do not. Not another word! . . . Josefina!

BALDOMERO. We shall see, young man. We shall see.

JOSEFINA *enters*.

BALDOMERO. [*To JOSEFINA*] Lovelier than the day!

JOSEFINA. Don Baldomero! You have come for Esperanza? But you did not know she was here.

BALDOMERO. Where better? No, I did not come for her. Perhaps she told you that she had had a little tiff with mamma? A mere trifle! Believe me, if you are thinking of having children, a dozen or none.

JOSEFINA. I agree with you perfectly. Where is my husband?

BALDOMERO. He assures me that everything has been provided for, thanks, no doubt, to you. You are his good angel. A man is to be envied who has an intelligent wife.

JOSEFINA. I suppose your wife is coming to see the fireworks? There will be music and dancing for the young people.

BALDOMERO. She would not miss them for the world. I shall bring her myself—before the crowd is too great.

JOSEFINA. Adios till then. Esperanza will be so delighted to see her mamma.

BALDOMERO. She is always delighted when she is with you, whom she loves so dearly. [*To MANOLO*] Adios till then, my son.

MANOLO. [*Acridly*] Adios.

DON BALDOMERO *goes out*.

JOSEFINA. Your future father-in-law.

MANOLO. Why put it in the future?

JOSEFINA. The girl is madly in love with you; make no

mistake about that. She told me so herself; she is only waiting for her parents——

MANOLO. To consent?

JOSEFINA. No, to refuse. Don't you see?

MANOLO. May that girl avenge upon her father the wrongs of Moraleda! But they will never refuse; they are too clever for that. He has devised other means. Don Baldomero is going to send me away.

JOSEFINA. You?

MANOLO. Yes, he has me in his power. Don Baldomero understands. If it were only a question of myself, if I were the only one, but when it concerns another, the dearest, the most respected. . . . You can guess.

JOSEFINA. My husband?

MANOLO. I said the dearest—if I said respected, it was only because I respect that which is exacting of respect.

JOSEFINA. Are you speaking of me? Has Don Baldomero been speaking to you of me? You don't mean to say that he is going to oblige you to renounce your marriage with Esperanza, to leave Moraleda upon my account?

MANOLO. As far as the marriage is concerned, I could renounce that well enough. It was you who advised me to make up to Esperanza.

JOSEFINA. She asked me to. It would have been a brilliant match for you, and she would have lost nothing by it. What a difference between you and these country fellows who don't know enough to move out of the club! They never had a serious thought in their lives, but they have all the vices of Madrid—yes, they have. Besides, I had set my heart on it. Our friendship—well, the long and the short of it is that our friendship is a friendship between a man and a woman, and such friendships are always dangerous.

MANOLO. But delicious! Love without responsibility; on the contrary, with a certain immunity——

JOSEFINA. Immunity? What are you talking about?

MANOLO. Why not?

JOSEFINA. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. If you expect any immunity from me you are no friend of mine.

MANOLO. Expect? No! Far from it! But when you first confided in my loyalty, when, with tears in your eyes you said to me: "I am alone, all alone in the world. I have nobody but my husband, and there are so many things you cannot confide to a husband, however much you may respect him—for instance, what you think of him—it would be sure to make him angry!"

JOSEFINA. Did I say that?

MANOLO. In substance; I may have forgotten the words. Then I clasped your hand and pressed it tenderly, while you said to me: "Be my friend, my true friend!" And from that moment the faith, the trust which you placed in me, all those little confidences which we shared together, which were yours and mine—ours, Josefina—trifles that to another who loved you less might have proved tiresome, a bore, but which only served to increase my affection and captivate my heart. . . . Ah! How happy, how contented we were then, Josefina! How noble I thought myself! How worthy your regard! Believe me, I would not have exchanged this sweet friendship of ours for all the loves of the united world!

JOSEFINA. You are so upright! So noble!

[*Taking one of his hands.*]

MANOLO. [*Taking her other hand*] Never doubt me! Never! I would give up everything for you.

JOSEFINA. No, I could not accept such a sacrifice. What did Don Baldomero say?

MANOLO. Josefina! Unless I leave immediately, Don

Baldomero will drive us all out in disgrace. He is determined. I irritate, I infuriate him.—I don't know whether as suitor to his daughter or as secretary to the Governor; but it is all the same.

JOSEFINA. But have you anything to do in Madrid?

MANOLO. Nothing. If I go, I abandon everything. I don't know what will become of me. I have struggled so long, so hard—yes, I am sure of it, these last days a pain has come over my heart. . . . I do not feel well; yes, it is in my heart. . . .

JOSEFINA. Don't say that! It cannot be anything. Do you know, sometimes I feel as if I had an affection there myself? But you mustn't go! I won't let you go! I will explain to Santiago—

MANOLO. Don Santiago? Do you know that Don Baldomero has a letter of yours in his pocket?

JOSEFINA. A letter of mine? What letter?

MANOLO. A letter which you directed to me.

JOSEFINA. But there never was anything in any letter which I directed to you.

MANOLO. That depends upon what you call anything. Don't you remember? You had to pay some bills in Madrid which your husband knew nothing about, and it was necessary to obtain money at once. There was only one way to get it. Reinoso demanded a guarantee. Though Don Santiago doesn't count, there was no reason why anybody should trust me; so we agreed that you should write me a letter, and that letter—

JOSEFINA. You didn't let that letter get out of your possession?

MANOLO. You insult me. Do you suppose that it was I who wanted the guarantee?

JOSEFINA. But why didn't you tell me that you were going to give up that letter?

MANOLO. Why did you tell me that if you didn't have that money in Madrid within twenty-four hours, your husband would apply for a separation? So that I shouldn't pay any attention to you, I suppose.

JOSEFINA. Did I tell you that? But don't you see? Now we are in the hands of these people.

MANOLO. You didn't suppose that those rascals were going to get you out of debt out of gallantry?

JOSEFINA. You ought to have told me this before. Now what are we to do? If my husband sees that letter——

MANOLO. He won't see it. I am going away.

JOSEFINA. There will be more trouble! Believe me, this is only the beginning. A woman is never safe until she is dead. No wonder we are deceived so easily when you men who know the world and what it is——

MANOLO. We do, and that is the reason I intend to get you that letter before I go, cost what it may. I do not purpose to have you suffer upon my account.

JOSEFINA. And I do not purpose to have you lose your position upon mine. And all because my husband lacks character! Suppose he should hear of it? He would be convinced that I had deceived him; he would insist upon it. And I never did; I never deceived anybody—least of all my husband. What difference does it make whether they play for money or don't play for money? Let them play if they want to. What harm is there in it? But no! We must uphold morality, we must act with decorum. As if on the miserable salary a governor gets one could act with decorum! But that is the way you men are; you are all the same. You might have thought of something—but no! You have only one idea—which would have occurred to anybody: "*I will go away, you will stay here, alone—alone in the jaws of these wolves who are ravening to devour you, God knows how!*" And yet you talk as if I had no heart, as if I cared for nothing

but myself, as if you were of no consequence at all! Oh, if I were only a man I would show you! You would see what stuff I had in me!

MANOLO. I know already, Josefina. And if you only dared, if I could only count upon you——

JOSEFINA. What do you mean?

MANOLO. I would accept the challenge and give them battle all along the line. Don Baldomero would soon learn what stuff I had in me. I would raise the downtrodden, I would summon the oppressed, I would stir up against him all those who hate, who despise him, and when he attempted to drive us out, the unanimous voice of the people would be on our side. Ah, if you would only believe in me! If you only had it in you to despise these rascallions who loom so large in your eyes!

JOSEFINA. What could I do?

MANOLO. Attack them on their own ground. In the first place, tell Don Santiago to permit the performance of "*Obscurantismo*," tell him to go to it, be present yourself.

JOSEFINA. I? What nonsense!

MANOLO. Yes, it would seem like nonsense to your friends. Your friends! Were they your friends when you were struggling so hard in Madrid, when they had nothing to get out of you, and you had everything to get out of them?

JOSEFINA. That is true. . . .

MANOLO. Then look at the other side. What a triumph with the people! If you had only seen the crowd at the box-office! What enthusiasm! What ecstasy! And how easy it would be to take advantage of it! But when the order arrives suspending the performance, and they see in it the influence of the reactionary element—don't deceive yourself, it will precipitate a crisis. It may even necessitate the dismissal of Don Santiago under the most unfavorable circum-

stances, with the ministry and with the people. On the other hand, suppose that the reactionaries drive him out because he shows leanings toward liberalism. Then the great body of the people will be on his side. They will acclaim him as the champion of popular rights, and the government—the government is in a very critical situation. A crisis will have to be met by making concessions to the liberal elements, and these will have no alternative but to support Don Santiago, to promote him perhaps to a governorship of the first class. That is clear; it is politics. It is necessary to look up, to peer into the far horizons, to cultivate largeness of view and grandeur of soul, and not to fall into the error of believing that to be most important which lies directly under our eyes. Don't you see?

JOSEFINA. No, I don't. I don't see anything at all. It may be, since you say so. If there should be a crisis——

MANOLO. Make no mistake. There will be one.

JOSEFINA. What makes you think so?

MANOLO. The country is disturbed. There are disorders in the provinces. It will soon be necessary to suspend the constitutional guarantees, and for suppressing liberties, you know, there is no government like a liberal one. It inspires greater confidence. Besides, it is fall. There are two seasons in the year which are especially dangerous to any government—the summer when it begins to grow warm, and when the cold weather comes on again in the fall, with the consequent changes of clothes. Thousands of families in the opposition anxious to take baths in the summer, and other thousands uncertain when to change to their heavy underwear in the fall, together these constitute an incalculable force which needs only the slightest pretext in order to overthrow any government. Believe me, if he is to preserve himself, Don Santiago must make overtures to liberalism

and the first step for him to take is to permit the performance of "*Obscurantismo*," in spite of the opposition which it has aroused.

JOSEFINA. But if I tell him that, don't you see, he will think that I am crazy? He will be justified in believing that I am out of my head.

MANOLO. Why?

JOSEFINA. Because not half an hour ago I threatened to go back to Madrid if he consented to it.

MANOLO. But in half an hour you have seen a new light, you have come to look at the matter from another point of view. When you spoke before, it was upon impulse. Now you advise him more deliberately.

JOSEFINA. But how am I to tell him the opposite of everything which I told him before?

MANOLO. You convinced him before against his will. That makes it all the easier.

JOSEFINA. But you don't know what I said! Besides, what good will it do? People will only repeat what the Marchioness said to Doña O: My husband permits the performance because your brother is manager of the company and you have an interest in it. That is the reason you have used your influence with my husband and with me. Imagine what they will invent!

MANOLO. Yes, they know everything. The last person I expected to see here was my brother; but he is my brother—yes, he is! He has been knocking about the world as I have been knocking about life, both of us fighting for a foothold, a chance to live—he with his actors and his comedians, I among actors also—and for both of us the real comedy has been the same, the earning of our daily bread; and we have written it with our lives. I am not sorry I met him. He comes in time to remind me that all men are my brothers

who at one season or another have had to struggle and fight for their lives as we have done—all of us who are denied the luxury of a conscience which conforms to our acts, the disinherited, the oppressed. I may wear this livery of respectability, of the hypocrite, it is true, but I should be a dastard and a coward if I did not stand by his side, if I did not flaunt this society of Tartuffes, who pretend to defend their principles when they are merely defending their pockets. Liberty, patriotism, religion—fine words these for barricades behind which to bolster up their social position, their salaries, yes, or their interests in dives and gambling-hells, like Don Baldomero. At least I do not deceive—I fight in the open, and I hold to my own. You know that already. Choose! Decide for yourself—you are a woman of courage. You, too, have struggled up, and you ought to know upon which side are yours—upon theirs or upon ours!

JOSEFINA. You are right. I often have thought so myself. We ought not to allow these people to impose upon us. We ought to teach them a lesson. What I don't see is how I am to convince my husband.

MANOLO. Here he comes. You can try.

JOSEFINA. He will think I am crazy.

DON SANTIAGO *enters*.

SANTIAGO. [*Greatly pleased with himself*] Well, I hope you will be satisfied. [*To MANOLO*] On the whole it is for the best. I have sent a complete explanation to the ministry, and an order of prohibition to the management. Why? What is the matter? What faces! Have I made another mistake? Josefina! Speak!

JOSEFINA. Santiago, a wife ought never to meddle in her husband's affairs. She is too impressionable; the circle of her ideas is too limited, too confined. . . . [*Aside to MANOLO*] How is that?

MANOLO. Good!

JOSEFINA. We attach too much importance to trifles, we forget to look up, to peer into the far horizons....

MANOLO. Sublime!

SANTIAGO. What is the meaning of all this?

JOSEFINA. The meaning of it is, Santiago, that a sensible man never pays any attention to what he is told by his wife.

SANTIAGO. And has that just occurred to you in the last quarter of an hour? [*To MANOLO*] What do you say?

MANOLO. Josefina has been imposed upon by designing persons. Without realizing it, she has been influenced to her disadvantage.

SANTIAGO. You don't mean to tell me that it was a mistake? [*To JOSEFINA*] I said so from the beginning; and you, you tell me now——

JOSEFINA. That you have committed a blunder, that you have fallen into a trap, that you have flown in the face of public opinion, and without a moment's loss of time you ought to save the remnants of your reputation by removing at once this arbitrary, this ridiculous prohibition.

MANOLO. More arbitrary than ridiculous....

SANTIAGO. Oh, oh, oh! This is too much! [*To MANOLO*] What am I to do? I knew it! I knew it! Advise me. How will it be possible for me to change my order a second time? My authority will be gone. No, no! This time I will stand by my decree though the heavens fall. Wouldn't it be contemptible if now—tell me impartially——

MANOLO. Yes.... It would....

JOSEFINA. [*To MANOLO*] Back me up. [*Aloud*] Manolo will tell you, if he is sincere, what he has told me: that you are exposing yourself to a great danger. There will be riots. Your obstinacy will cost you dear.

SANTIAGO. My obstinacy? Great God! What do they call obstinacy?

All begin to speak at the same time.

JOSEFINA. Tell him what you told me——

MANOLO. I said——

SANTIAGO. No, no! I couldn't think of it. Impossible!

JOSEFINA. You will be sorry when it is too late——

MANOLO. Don't get excited! Please! Please!

SANTIAGO. Not though the heavens fall! Not though a thunderbolt consume Moraleda!

MANOLO. Some one is coming.

JOSEFINA. The guests! Not another word!

[Moving forward to receive them.]

SANTIAGO. I should like to know what Richelieu or Philip II or any other great statesman would have amounted to with such a wife.

DON BASILIO, JIMENA, and BELISA enter. *All exchange bows and salutations.*

JOSEFINA. My dears, I am delighted! The first fruits of the evening. . . .

BASILIO. Señor Don Santiago!

BELISA. The crowd is so great that positively it would have been impossible for us to have passed if we had been later.

JIMENA. A *mare magnum*; it was like the sea.

BELISA. We were in danger of being squeezed to death.

JIMENA. Although we had determined to take the risk.

JOSEFINA. What risk?

JIMENA. There was a riot at the theatre.

SANTIAGO. A riot?

BASILIO. Hardly a riot. Three or four persons who protested. . . .

JOSEFINA. *[Aside to SANTIAGO]* You see what you have done.

SANTIAGO. I knew it, I knew it. It is getting dark. I'll turn on the lights. What! There is no current.

JOSEFINA. Who ever saw such wretched service?

JIMENA. It is the same at our house.

MANOLO. Another monopoly of Don Baldomero's. Everything here belongs to Don Baldomero.

SANTIAGO. With all the illuminations of the fiesta, of course there isn't enough power.

BASILIO. Don't talk to me about these modern improvements. As far as I can see, they are nothing but show.

JOSEFINA. [*Who has called a servant*] Bring candelabra with candles.

SERVANT. [*Handing MANOLO a card*] A gentleman to see you—and His Excellency. It is important; about the public order, sir.

MANOLO. The manager of the theatre.

JOSEFINA. [*Aside to MANOLO*] Your brother?

MANOLO. [*Idem*] Hush! [*To DON SANTIAGO*] Will you see him?

SANTIAGO. See him yourself, if you want to. I will see nobody. Get out of it if you can. I resign the command.

JOSEFINA. [*Aside to MANOLO*] What are you going to do?

MANOLO. [*Idem*] Fix Don Baldomero! [*Aloud*] Have I your consent?

SANTIAGO. You have my consent. Do as you see fit—as both of you see fit. In any case I send in my resignation.

MANOLO *goes out*.

BASILIO. With so many responsibilities resting upon your shoulders, it is difficult to understand how you can take so much pleasure in holding office.

SANTIAGO. Pleasure? None whatever, I assure you.

BELISA. [*From the balcony*] Do you see who is there?

JIMENA. Did you ever? Look, papa! Look!

JOSEFINA. What is the matter?

BELISA. One can no longer be sure of the clothes on one's back.

BASILIO. Who is it? These girls keep me always with my heart in my throat.

JIMENA. It's Tomasa, the maid. She asked permission to go and see the fireworks from her aunt's, and there she is walking up and down with a man who must be her *fiancé* at least.

SANTIAGO. Possibly.

JIMENA. Now if anything happens to her, they will say that we weren't looking out.

BELISA. Or that we set her the example.

JOSEFINA. Heavens! Who would say that?

JIMENA. [*To DON BASILIO*] You had better run down and send her home.

BELISA. The next thing you know she will be introducing a man into the house.

SANTIAGO. [*Aside to JOSEFINA*] What more could they wish?

The MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES and ESPERANZA enter.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. [*To JOSEFINA*] We were waiting for you.

JOSEFINA. I have just been in conference. Important business—politics.

ESPERANZA. Hello, Jimena! Hello, Belisa!

BELISA. How attractive you look this evening! Is that your new gown from Madrid?

ESPERANZA. No, it's from Paris.—I knew it must be a fright.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Where is papa? I have

scarcely seen him since we arrived in Moraleda. He is becoming quite shameless.

JIMENA. Heavens! What a thing to say! And she comes from Madrid.

BELISA. I don't like the fit of her dress.

JIMENA. No. Nor the way she does her hair.

BELISA. Have you noticed her walk? Yet they laugh at the provinces.

JOSEFINA. [*Aside to the MARCHIONESS*] Poetry and Rhetoric are giving us a course.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. They had better look out. There's a tang of the street to every Madrileña, even though she is a marchioness—a touch of the low quarters and the *Lavapiés*.

JOSEFINA. I can believe it.

DOÑA O and POLITO enter.

DOÑA O. Everybody is here this evening.

ESPERANZA. Why, mamma!

POLITO. Good evening, ladies.

JOSEFINA. So you got up your courage, did you?

DOÑA O. After the explanations of your husband. Ah! Don Santiago....

SANTIAGO. Oh! Doña O....

ESPERANZA. And papa?

DOÑA O. He was coming with me, but we happened on Polito, so I have him instead. Your father stopped off at the club. He was anxious to inquire.... There were rumors afloat....

BASILIO. Has there been any trouble?

DOÑA O. Oh, the rabble—people who have nothing better to do, making a demonstration in front of the theatre.

BELISA. Name of Joseph! Do you think we shall be safe, Don Santiago?

SANTIAGO. Perfectly safe. You have nothing to fear.

POLITO. [*Aside*] Are you angry with me, Esperancita?

ESPERANZA. I am angry with everybody!

POLITO. It doesn't seem possible—when everybody loves you.

ESPERANZA. I don't care to be loved by everybody.

POLITO. How amiable you are this evening!

ESPERANZA. You ought to know.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Where is papa?

POLITO. We left him at the café with Campos and Reguera. They will drop in later to see the fireworks.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Really? How jolly!

DOÑA O. [*To JOSEFINA*] Those bull-fighters in the Palace? Who ever heard of such effrontery?

The MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO and TERESA enter, accompanied by DON TEODORO and DON GUILLERMO.

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. See whom we are bringing with us!

TERESA. Yes, they are coming by force. They planned to stay below and watch the fireworks from the plaza.

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. We declined to trust them, however, in the crowd.

GUILLERMO. There is a crowd....

SANTIAGO. The fact is, although the plaza is large, the people will press over to one side....

TEODORO. There is a natural tendency to pressure in a crowd.

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. You ought to know; you are the talk of Moraleda. My last cook left upon your account.

GUILLERMO. Ha, ha! Sorcery.

BELISA. At least they show taste; she was a good one.

JIMENA. Parsley and onions are their favorite perfumes.

TEODORO. Even among vegetables, we have learned to discriminate.

BELISA. How polite!

JIMENA. Don't bother with them. They are confirmed bachelors, both.

TERESA. I simply adore fireworks.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. You won't get much of that sort of thing in the convent.

TERESA. So I am making the most of my opportunities now. Look at those boys! . . . Did you ever?

The MARQUIS OF TORRELODONES, CAMPOS and REGUERA enter.

MARQUIS. [*Bowing*] Ladies and gentlemen!

All exchange greetings.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. [*To CAMPOS*] Step out for a moment upon the balcony, Campos. I have a favor to ask of you.

CAMPOS. At your service, señorita.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. I want to take your picture. So—that is perfect.

CAMPOS. Preparing to thrust, eh? How is this?

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Divine! There! [*She takes the picture*] Bring up a chair.

DOÑA O. [*To JOSEFINA*] She takes him out on the balcony so that people can see her with him. She talks of nothing else.

JOSEFINA. I know it. And people are beginning to grow nervous.

MARQUIS. Yes, sir, there was a great commotion all about the theatre. Some shouted "Prohibition," others "No prohibition!" There were boos and *vivas*—cries of "Death!"

SANTIAGO. Why wasn't I informed of this before? Call

the police. [*Rings*] Public order must be preserved at any cost.

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. Is anything wrong? What is the matter?

SANTIAGO. No, nothing is the matter. Are there no servants in the house? A good government! A pretty government!

DON BALDOMERO *enters*.

ALL. [*As he appears*] What is the matter? What has happened?

ESPERANZA. Papa!

BALDOMERO. A barbarity! An atrocity! Stand back, for God's sake! They have insulted me.

ALL. You!

BALDOMERO. A riot! A mob! A demonstration in front of the theatre, and they are marching here singing the "Hymn of Riego"!

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. The "Hymn of Riego"? Goodness! When we heard it in my day, we always ran to hide the silver.

TEODORO. Since then it has marched off to other tunes, so now she can spare herself the trouble.

MANOLO *enters, followed by the CLERK*.

MANOLO. Don Santiago! Quick! They are marching on the Palace. You can hear them: "Long live liberty!" and "Death! Death".... [*To DON BALDOMERO*] Principally to you.

SANTIAGO. Quick! My stick! My hat! No, not my new one.... [*The women scream. BELISA faints*] Stand back!

BALDOMERO. And all this because you lack character!

SANTIAGO. If you had only let me do my duty....

DOÑA O. Now you see what it means to pander to the people.

JOSEFINA. It is my husband's fault—yes, for having listened to you! Didn't you tell us that everybody was on your side?

Shouts, cries of "Viva!" and "Death!"

ALL. Here they come! Shut the windows! Don't be afraid. Look out for stones! Turn down the lights!

Great confusion. The lights are turned down.

SANTIAGO. Where am I? Let me go!

JOSEFINA. Don't go, Santiago! Don't go!

SANTIAGO. Duty before everything! [*Tremendous explosion in the plaza. A red glow illuminates the windows at the rear. Shouts and cries*] An explosion! Fire!

MANOLO. The fireworks have gone off!

DOÑA O. Alas for Moraleda!

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. It is the end of the world!

JOSEFINA. And it is all your fault!

Curtain

THE THIRD ACT

Two boxes in the bull-ring at Moraleda. The GOVERNOR'S box is upon the right, and is somewhat larger than the other, which is upon the spectator's left.

An usher is distributing programmes printed upon silk through the vestibules of the boxes. DON TRINO and DAMIAN unpack the lunch upon a table in the vestibule of the GOVERNOR'S box.

TRINO. Set the basket on the floor, the glasses go here. Have we everything?

DAMIAN. Yes. I shall be back during the intermission to serve lunch—after the third bull.

TRINO. [*Going up to the box*] How is the plaza? [*Applause. DON TRINO draws back hurriedly*] Ah! They took me for the Governor and applauded me. They are ready to begin.

DAMIAN. It's half an hour yet. The people in the sun come early, as the seats are not reserved. There's less enthusiasm than there was last year. Have a drop?

TRINO. *Demonio!*

DAMIAN. A bottle more or less. What difference does it make?

TRINO. They'll see us from the boxes.

DAMIAN. There's nobody in the boxes—the country people are still coming in. Too much excitement yesterday. It detracts from the interest.

TRINO. Good wine! Very good wine——

DAMIAN. Everybody has timiditis. Did you notice the precautions in the plaza?

TRINO. Well, what more do they wish? The most exacting should be satisfied. Liberty has triumphed. We have seen the play, and it turns out to be a good one. Yes, sir! Those who didn't like it, didn't like it, but the public has been heard from.

DAMIAN. Yes, but how? On their way home they broke two windows in the café. At Don Baldomero's there isn't so much as a whole pane of glass.

TRINO. He hasn't given up, though. Did you see the *Aborrorro*?

DAMIAN. And the *Echo*! This story about the secretary and the Governor's wife— Nothing else was talked of in the café this morning. Have another glass? [*Offering wine.*]

TRINO. No, thank you. It would never do to have it go to my head. This story—you can take it from me—it's a lie out of the whole cloth, a calumny. I come into contact daily with Doña Josefina and Don Manuel, yes, sir, and with the Governor himself, and I consider them all in their way decent people, very decent people—without meaning anything by it—among the most decent we have had in the Palace during the twenty years I have been in it, and we have had all sorts of people, including decent people. But politics have no heart. It is every one for himself and the devil for all of them. Poor Doña Josefina! She was crying all morning like a Magdalen.

DAMIAN. No! She was?

TRINO. She hides nothing from me. While she was combing her hair, she let fall such a tear!

DAMIAN. But there are people who have seen the letters. You can read them in the papers.

TRINO. You can, can you? How do you know they are not forgeries? Yes, sir!

DAMIAN. [*Much impressed*] Ah! Very likely.

TRINO. Take that French case for example: the scandal nearly disrupted the army; even generals were mixed up in it. All politics, of course. Talk about handwriting—I could fix up for you myself pretty much what you please. If I had had any leaning toward evil, as thank God I have had toward good, and I have never had reason to regret it—a quiet conscience is better than great riches—well, the fact is I could fix up for you pretty much what I pleased. But I have never taken advantage of this ability, no, sir, unless sometimes in jest. Now and then a man must have his jest. But there are people who think otherwise, who will go to any length in order to get money. Yes, sir! But Doña Josefina? Nonsense! She is innocent. If you could see her as I do every morning, sitting at the foot of the bed fixing the collars and cuffs on the Governor's shirt!

DAMIAN. I wouldn't have believed it possible.

TRINO. No, sir, I tell you people are malicious, evil-minded. For instance, I brought up a niece of my wife's out of charity from a very tender age, and everybody said.... Believe me, there is more in these things than appears upon the surface. Yes, sir! I have had experience. Don Baldomero's daughter is in love with Don Manolo; her father is opposed to the match; then Josefina intervenes with Doña O, and she is offended by it; so to disillusion the girl, they invent the first slander that comes into their heads.

Noise in the plaza.

DAMIAN. *Caramba!* They are growing impatient.

TRINO. Yes, the sun is hot and they bring their wine-skins. They are warming up. [*Looking into the box*] Ah! Now they hiss me.

DAMIAN. If it begins like this——

TRINO. What will the end be?

JOSEFINA and MANOLO enter.

JOSEFINA. What is the matter? What are they hooting at?

TRINO. Nothing, señora, the heat, the wine. . . .

JOSEFINA. [*Seating herself at the table without entering the box*] *Ay!* I never was so nervous. Everything upsets me.

TRINO. And His Excellency the Governor? Did he come with you?

MANOLO. No, he is in conference with the manager and the chief of the *Guardia civil*.

JOSEFINA. We thought it best to be early so as to avoid the crowd. Have we long to wait?

MANOLO. A few minutes.

TRINO. We were setting out the refreshments.

DAMIAN. Yes, the lunch. I shall be back during the intermission. With your permission, señora. . . .

Goes out.

TRINO. If there is nothing for me to do, I will retire also.

JOSEFINA. Aren't you going to stay to see the fight?

TRINO. *Sí, señora*, I have seats with my family.

JOSEFINA. Gracious! Have you a family, Don Trino? I didn't know you were married.

TRINO. I am a widower, *sí, señora*. I have a niece and three small children. At your service, señora.

JOSEFINA. Why does he say at my service? A widower! I hope there is not going to be any trouble.

TRINO. I hope not, señora. It is only the people amusing themselves. If the *toreros* are good and the bulls fierce, all will be well; but if the bulls are bad, as they were last year—Good Lord! They will burn the plaza! At least that is the custom.

MANOLO. It is?

JOSEFINA. Barbarous!

TRINO. Worse than barbarous; it is terrible! The spec-

tacle itself is a savage one, *sí, señora*; but, believe me, the people, when they are aroused, are a thousand times more savage than the spectacle. *Sí, señora.*

JOSEFINA. I don't think I shall enjoy it. I like the animation, the parade of the fighters, the entrance of the bull, but nothing else. The truth is, this year I didn't want to come....

TRINO. No wonder. The circumstances—that is, the conditions.... Ah! What a world we live in! *Sí, señora!* If you wish nothing more?

JOSEFINA. No, no, nothing, Don Trino.

DON TRINO *goes out.*

MANOLO. [*Looking into the plaza*] There is a big crowd.

JOSEFINA. There is? I am sorry to hear it. I wish there wasn't anybody at all. Give me a glass of water.

MANOLO. Have a sandwich? A cake? Didn't you eat anything this morning? You look pale.

JOSEFINA. No, I couldn't eat. I am so restless, so nervous.

MANOLO. Why? It is quite unnecessary. I tell you we have won.

JOSEFINA. Yes, it was all very well last night while the performance was going on—applause and cheers at the theatre; but this afternoon, after people have seen the papers, after they have had a chance to talk! On the way here everybody was reading the *Abejorro*. I could see them from the carriage.

MANOLO. Yes, but everybody was indignant, as I thought. They say it is a calumny invented by Don Baldomero to revenge himself for the insults of last night.

JOSEFINA. That may be. But didn't you hear? Esperanza made a scene this morning—I had it from the servants. She says she is going to marry you, and she is going to marry you immediately.

MANOLO. If I thought that her parents— But no, let them keep her. Precious baggage! Where is Don Santiago? Has he said anything to you? Has he read the papers?

JOSEFINA. I don't think so. He never reads the opposition papers. But that letter— If he ever sees that letter!

MANOLO. Don Baldomero says that he is going to send it to the minister at Madrid.

JOSEFINA. It would take more than that to shock García Pérez.

MANOLO. Yes, he is shock-proof.

JOSEFINA. But this afternoon! It is this afternoon I am afraid of.

MANOLO. This afternoon you will have a triumph. Everything is provided for.

JOSEFINA. Do you think so?

MANOLO. You will see. When Campos comes to his speech, it will be a sensation. I have given it to him in writing and he is studying it in his dressing-room. He will say: "Your Excellency, I fight for you and for liberal governors like you, for virtuous and beautiful women like those who sit at your side, liberal also like yourself. For the bull is a reactionary, and he would be for obscurity wherever it was to be found." He will say this looking straight into the box of Don Baldomero. "And long live liberty!" It will be an ovation. If there is any trouble, we have packed the amphitheatre. He who protests.... Have no fear, Josefina, the sovereign public is with us. If the bulls are only good and Campos in form so as to arouse the people, the victory is ours!

JOSEFINA. I don't know. What do you want me to say? I am very much afraid.

*The MARCHIONESS OF TORRELÓDONES, DON SANTIAGO
and the MARQUIS OF TORRELODONES enter.*

SANTIAGO. We had better not show ourselves until the last moment.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. [*To JOSEFINA*] How is it that you are so early?

JOSEFINA. We were anxious to get ahead of the crowd. Later the men stand in two rows at the foot of the stairs——

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Yes, but they don't say such things as they do in Madrid. [*To MANOLO*] Are you very fond of bulls?

MANOLO. I know very little about them. The sooner they are disposed of the more agreeable to me.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. I hope that everything will pass off smoothly.

SANTIAGO. I know absolutely nothing about bulls. The mayor was to have presided this year as usual, but there was some trouble at the last minute—an unsavory dispute with the management. They refused to give him the contract to remove the carcasses and dead horses for his brother-in-law, so now I am obliged to assume the responsibility.

MARQUIS. We shall prompt you at the proper moment.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Remember when the picadors are on, Campos will give a signal. If he lays his finger beside his nose you are to call for *banderillas*. Three pairs will do, as you know, unless they miss; then give them four. Or if the bull is no good, two will be sufficient. It is all very simple. You will pick it up as you go along.

MARQUIS. In case you are uncertain what to do, the public will advise you. It is the safest way. If they shout "Hi, hi! Wake up there!" or "At him, Governor!" or——

SANTIAGO. Or call me idiot or fool, I suppose, or something worse? It is all very diverting. After the comedy of yesterday, the tragedy of to-day!

MARQUIS. Unfortunately the bulls have gone stale after

four days in the corrals. It was a great mistake upon your part to postpone the *corrida*.

SANTIAGO. That is right. Blame it on me! It will be my fault, I suppose, if they turn out to be cows.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Don Santiago, you must not say such a thing. You ought to see that mottled fellow, though. And we have another that is a wonder!

MARQUIS. Do you know, I can't keep Lucerito away from the littlest one?

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. But I promised that Campos should kill him.

MARQUIS. What can I do?

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. It is all our fault for not bringing the overseer along.

MANOLO. Is this a pet bull?

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Oh, I took a fancy to him, so, naturally, I wished Campos to kill him. Sometimes one will take a fancy....

JOSEFINA. For heaven's sake! What a fancy to take!

SANTIAGO. I am in the hands of the Lord. In any event, it will be my last official act in the province.

JOSEFINA. Eh?

SANTIAGO. I have telegraphed my resignation.

JOSEFINA AND MANOLO. Your resignation?

MARQUIS. Man! Why so hasty? It is not as bad as that. You take these trifles too seriously.

SANTIAGO. Perhaps I do, my dear Marquis. But if the exigency had not been so great, I should have resigned long ago. Order must be preserved.

JOSEFINA. But don't you see that without consulting me....without.... Now people will believe....they will say....and it seems to justify them....

SANTIAGO. What will they say? They have deceived me,

you have deceived me. Everybody, everybody has deceived me!

JOSEFINA. Santiago!

SANTIAGO. Everybody! And I don't care to hear another word about it.

JOSEFINA. [*Aside to MANOLO*] He has seen the letter.

MANOLO. [*Aside to JOSEFINA*] No. He has read the *Abejorro*.

JOSEFINA. [*Aside to MANOLO*] His resignation! Now what are we going to do?

MANOLO. [*Aside to JOSEFINA*] Forget it! It will come out all right.

BELISA, JIMENA, DON BASILIO, DON TEODORO and
DON GUILLERMO enter.

TEODORO. How charming you look to-day!

BELISA. Don Teodoro, you are a flatterer!

JIMENA. We are too clever for you. When you are with us, you need not think that you have all the sport.

GUILLERMO. Are you going into Don Baldomero's box?

BASILIO. They are and they are not.

TEODORO. The devil you say! How is that?

BASILIO. It is our wish to remain neutral in these quarrels. My daughters are invited both by the Governor and by Don Baldomero; so, in order not to give offense——

JIMENA. I am going into the Governor's box.

BELISA. And I into Don Baldomero's.

TEODORO. Very clever indeed! But what are you going to do?

BASILIO. I am going home when I leave them. These spectacles do not divert me; on the contrary, they disgust me. They make me despair of the future of this unfortunate land.

TEODORO. Bah! As long as we have the sun—and these ladies—we shall worry along.

JIMENA. Thank you for including us.

GUILLERMO. Were you at the theatre last evening?

BASILIO. They were and they were not.

TEODORO. Good! One was and the other was not? An excellent idea!

BELISA. Jimena was there.

JIMENA. It was very exciting.

TEODORO. Tut, tut, there was nobody there but men.

JIMENA. You seemed to enjoy it.

TEODORO. We are invited to sit with Don Baldomero.

BASILIO. I must leave Jimena with Josefina.

BELISA. Goodness, papa! Not before the ladies arrive. It would never do for me to be left alone with these gentlemen. [*To DON TEODORO and DON GUILLERMO*] Not with your reputations!

TEODORO. I assure you we shall be judicious.

BASILIO. Nonsense! Don Teodoro is old enough to be your father. He might be for all you know.

BELISA. Why, papa!

TEODORO. He might and he might not.

BASILIO. Come with me, Jimena. Good-by, my dear. Remember, we meet in front of the Palace.

BELISA. [*Going into the box*] What a magnificent sight!

TEODORO. Did you ever see a woman look ugly in a mantilla? [*To GUILLERMO*] Lend me your glasses; they magnify better than mine do.

JOSEFINA. Jimena!

SANTIAGO. How charming you look to-day!

BASILIO. I am leaving her with you.

SANTIAGO. But you? Aren't you going to stay?

BASILIO. No. I do not care for these spectacles. On the contrary, they disgust me. Good day.

JIMENA. Good-by, papa.

DON BASILIO *goes out.*

JOSEFINA. But where is Belisa?

JIMENA. Belisa is in the next box.

JOSEFINA. Oh! With the Remolinos?

JIMENA. Yes, they invited us both, but, of course, we both preferred to come with you. So in order not to give offense, we had to draw lots, and I was the more fortunate.

JOSEFINA. It is very kind of you to say so.

DOÑA O, ESPERANZA *and* DON BALDOMERO *enter.*

BALDOMERO. We have plenty of time.

ESPERANZA. Is that the reason you kept shouting at me, "Hurry up! Hurry up!"?

BALDOMERO. What else could I do, my dear, with you trying on seven dresses and fourteen mantillas, without getting anywhere with any of them?

ESPERANZA. The result is I look like a fright.

DOÑA O. You are too much for your papa and mamma. I cannot stand this any longer, now that Petronila has left. She will never do our hair for us again after the way you have treated her.

ESPERANZA. I don't care if she doesn't, mamma. If you are going to talk all afternoon, I might as well sit with Josefina.

DOÑA O. This is too much. That a child should strike her parent such a blow!

BALDOMERO. Esperanza, listen to me. No more of your nonsense! I forbid you to notice anybody in the next box. I intend to create a scandal in the plaza.

ESPERANZA. A scandal? So that is what you brought me here for?

DoÑA O. Nothing of the sort. We wanted to get somewhere where there'd be more noise than you could make.

BALDOMERO. Now don't begin to cry. Come on into the box.—How do you do, gentlemen?

TEODORO. Baldomero!

BELISA. How charming you look to-day!

TEODORO. Wonderful! Superb!

ESPERANZA. And Jimena?

BELISA. Oh! She is with Josefina. They invited us both. Of course, we both preferred to come with you, so in order not to give offense, we had to draw lots, and I was the more fortunate.

DoÑA O. Did you have to draw lots last night to see who was to go to the theatre?

BELISA. I should think we did. And poor Jimena was sacrificed!

BALDOMERO. I suppose you were there?

TEODORO. Don Baldomero! Between the acts, as it were, out of curiosity—to see who was in the audience. I never heard such shouting and yelling, booing and hissing, over nothing as it seemed to me.

DoÑA O. They broke all our windows when they came out.

ESPERANZA. I lost some lovely double geraniums which I had on my balcony.

BALDOMERO. And all in the name of Liberty!

DoÑA O. All because we have an idiot for a governor who does not even know how to govern his wife!

BALDOMERO. He cannot control his wife, yet he expects to rule a province.

ESPERANZA. Papa, be careful! They'll hear us. They are in the next box.

DoÑA O. That is the reason he speaks so loudly.

BALDOMERO. We want them to hear.

JOSEFINA. [*To MANOLO*] Are they there yet? Listen....

MANOLO. Yes. I hear Don Baldomero.

JOSEFINA. And I hear his wife. They may drive my husband back to Madrid, but before they do, I promise you that they will hear from me. Oh, they will hear from me!

MANOLO. How lovely you are when you are angry! How lovely you always are!

JOSEFINA. And you are like the people—too forward. I shall have to suspend the constitutional guarantees.

DOÑA O. Sit down by me, Belisa. [*To ESPERANZA*] You sit on this side.

BELISA. I warn you, I shall scream the whole afternoon. Only think! The bull may catch a man!

TEODORO. It must seem incredible— I mean, he may, he may.

SANTIAGO. It is time to begin. We had better pass in. The ladies on this side....

MARQUIS. Yes, as far from Your Excellency as possible. Otherwise it might deprive the public of the freedom to protest.

SANTIAGO. Do you think so? Perhaps we had best all sit together....

JOSEFINA. Come, Carmen! Come, Jimena!

POLITO and REGUERA enter.

POLITO. This is not a box, Reguera—it is a garden of flowers.

LADIES. Thank you! Thank you so much!

MARQUIS. Are you in costume, Polito? Do you expect to qualify in the *corrida*?

SANTIAGO. Remain by me, gentlemen. You understand these things better than I do. I never presided over anything in my life except the Provincial Deputation.

Commotion in the arena.

MARQUIS. It is time to begin.

SANTIAGO. Good! Pass in.

*They enter the box; the GOVERNOR gives the signal.
Trumpet.*

JOSEFINA. [To MANOLO] No applause at the entrance of my husband? A bad sign!

MANOLO. Wait. They are holding back.

Hisses.

JOSEFINA. Ah! They hiss.

MANOLO. It's the *alguacil*. He has lost a stirrup.

JOSEFINA. *Ay!* But they have rattles! They are shaking them at me.

Grand march and entrance of the toreros. Loud applause.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Campos! There's Campos! How graceful that man is in the arena! He is wearing my cloak.

POLITO. He has a new suit.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. The first time of everything.

The MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO and TERESA enter.

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. We are late.

TERESA. The parade has begun. Hurry, I like a fine entrance.... How do you do? Gracious! What a crowd! Isn't it stirring?

DOÑA O. Come right in.

SANTIAGO. You throw the key, Polito. I'll be sure to hit somebody on the head.

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. Did Josefina come with her husband?

DOÑA O. Yes, they are in the next box. Who ever heard of such effrontery? Exhibiting herself in public after what happened this morning! Never mention her to me again.

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. Never mention her to me.

Trumpet. Applause.

MARQUIS. Ah! Ah! What do you think of him?

POLITO. I can't see the animal.

MARQUIS. Didn't I tell you?

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Beautiful! Divine! By Marrullero out of La Pintada, isn't he, papa?

MARQUIS. You understand these things better than I.

TEODORO. [*To DON GUILLERMO*] Can you tell me who that buxom blonde is in the front row of Section Eight?

GUILLERMO. Who is she? Oh. . . . [*In TEODORO'S ear.*]

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Everybody knows who she is.

MARQUIS. Now for some sport.

POLITO. The picadors!

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Why doesn't Campos throw off that cloak?

POLITO. Why doesn't he? I wonder.

REGUERA. How would you like to be in the ring now?

MARQUIS. The fools! Look! Look! They'll murder the bull——

SANTIAGO. But what are they there for?

BALDOMERO. You needn't tell me that is a bull. It is from the herd of that marquis from Madrid? Ha! It must be from Madrid!

TEODORO. It looks to me like an ox.

GUILLERMO. [*Shouting*] Ox!

TERESA. What makes you call him an ox?

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. Don't ask foolish questions, Teresa.

MARQUIS. What are they doing? What a way to begin!

BELISA AND JIMENA. [*Screaming*] Oh! Oh! He'll catch him, he'll kill him!

JOSEFINA. That wasn't so bad after all.

DOÑA O. Don't scream like that. There is no reason for you to be afraid.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. What is the matter with Campos? Why don't they go at him the right way?

REGUERA. I'll give him a tip. . . .

POLITO. Don't shout down from here.

JOSEFINA. How absurd! He is running away.

MANOLO. Good afternoon, he says, that will be all for to-day.

SANTIAGO. When a bull won't fight, what are you going to do?

MARQUIS. Who says he won't fight? They don't give him a chance. They don't go at him the right way. Ha! Send that rascal to jail! He'll injure the animal. What does he get paid for?

Cries and hooting in the arena. "Back to the pen!"

"Give him torpedoes!"

SANTIAGO. They call for torpedoes.

MARQUIS. It will be a damned outrage, sir, if you give them torpedoes.

SANTIAGO. Ah! Another discussion!

POLITO. Take care! He may strike you. The Marquis is capable of anything when it comes to his bulls.

SANTIAGO. That would be the last indignity. Does he expect me to go down into the arena and pull him out by the tail? There you are! [*Rhythmic hand-clapping. Palmas de tango*] What is that?

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. *Palmas de tango*, the latest thing in Madrid.

POLITO. Yes, I introduced it here last season myself.

MARQUIS. With the first automobile. I suppose that was the fault of the bull. Look! Look! What a way to handle a lance!

Tremendous uproar. "Torpedoes! Torpedoes!" Hisses.

"What's the matter?" "Wake up there! Wake up!"

JOSEFINA. Didn't I tell you?

MANOLO. The bull has settled down for a nap.

SANTIAGO. Now what am I to do?

TEODORO. Shoot him, I say.

BALDOMERO. He must have influence with the liberal party. He is gubernatorial.

The uproar increases.

JIMENA AND BELISA. *Ay! Ay!* He'll catch him, Le'll kill him!

JOSEFINA. Don't you hear the people, Santiago?

SANTIAGO. Don't you see the Marquis, Josefina?

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Campos gives the signal.

SANTIAGO. The signal for what? The benediction?

MARQUIS. For the *banderillas*.

SANTIAGO. What *banderillas*? With torpedoes?

MARQUIS. How torpedoes?

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. It doesn't matter. Let Campos fix the torpedoes. He will make it all right with the people.

SANTIAGO. Good! The *banderillas*! Ah! Now she is the one to blame.

He gives the signal. Trumpet. Hisses, followed by applause.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. No wonder. As soon as he saw the *banderillas* . . .

MARQUIS. Ha! That bull can never bear fire.

SANTIAGO. No, he is more accustomed to drawing water.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. There! See him turn! Beautiful....

Torpedoes.

JIMENA AND BELISA. *Ay! Ay! Ay!*

JOSEFINA. Holy Mother! What nerves!

Applause.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. A hit! A hit! He threw in a pair! [*Applause*] Another! Another! I shall go out of my head.

JIMENA AND BELISA. *Ay! Ay! Ay!*

SANTIAGO. It is coming out all right after all.

MARQUIS. Give the signal to kill.

SANTIAGO. To kill? What a pity!

He gives the signal. Trumpet.

MANOLO. Now for the speech. Aha, Don Baldomero! Your time has come. Now for the verdict of the people.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. I wonder what he is going to say. Something gallant, of course. Campos is so clever at making speeches.... Everywhere he goes, it is the same....

CAMPOS. [*Within*] Your Excellency....liberal....beautiful....ladies....liberal also like yourself.... And long live liberty!

Great ovation. Vivas to liberty. Vivas for the GOVERNOR, vivas for the GOVERNOR'S wife.

MARQUIS. Bow, bow! And you bow! All bow!

BALDOMERO. What a farce! This is intolerable! I will not submit to it.

He rises from his seat; cries of "Death to the reactionaries!" "Down with obscuration!" Hisses.

MANOLO. I wonder who is getting his now.

DOÑA O. But it is not for you? It is not for us?

ESPERANZA. *Ay, papa!* It is for us!

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. The ruffians! . . . No, no! Impossible!

BELISA. An insult! To you?

DOÑA O. Disgusting! Come! They are hooting my husband. There is no respect, no decency anywhere.

BALDOMERO. I will teach them a lesson! I will show them! This was all put up beforehand.

TEODORO. There must be some mistake.

MARQUIS. The bull is cooling off!

DOÑA O. No, no. Don't speak to me! Let us go! Let us go!

MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO. And we shall go with you.

BELISA. Yes, indeed, Doña O!

DOÑA O, ESPERANZA, TERESA, BELISA, *the MARCHIONESS OF VILLAQUEJIDO and DON BALDOMERO go out.*

TEODORO. Well, they are gone. I must say I am glad of it.

GUILLERMO. Now we can enjoy ourselves.

TEODORO. It served them right. There is no doubt where the people stand.

Voices: "Riego! Riego! The 'Hymn of Riego'!"

SANTIAGO. They are calling for the "Hymn of Riego."

MARQUIS. The bull is cooling off!

Uproar. Cushions thrown and missiles. A bottle strikes the side of the box and breaks above the heads of the ladies.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. How can they expect Campos to kill the bull when they throw things like that?

Voices: "Riego! Riego!"

SANTIAGO. Where is the speaking-tube? Ah! . . .

MARQUIS. Tell them to play the "Hymn of Riego."

SANTIAGO. Of course. [*Through the tube*] The "Hymn of Riego"! Yes, tell them to play the "Hymn of Riego."

MANOLO. What do they say?

SANTIAGO. Another complication! They don't know it.

A second bottle.

JOSEFINA. I wish they would stop throwing those bottles. Somebody is going to get hurt.

SANTIAGO. [*Through the tube*] Hello! The Herald! Yes, send for the Herald. Tell him to announce that the band can't play the "Hymn of Riego," because it doesn't know it, but it will learn it by to-morrow. How is that?

ALL. Good! Good!

SANTIAGO. Now see if they won't be quiet.

MANOLO. [*To JOSEFINA*] Don Baldomero has left—and his family with him. What did I tell you?

JOSEFINA. You are a genius.

MANOLO. Only that? I am a friend. . . .

The voice of the HERALD is heard.

HERALD. Ladies and gentlemen: The band can't play the "Hymn of Riego" because it doesn't know it, but it will learn it by to-morrow, so as to be able to play it hereafter whenever required.

Drum. Applause. Distant "Vivas."

MARQUIS. Bow! Bow! All bow!

Ovation.

SANTIAGO. Really, I am very much affected. The people—more than the people, the entire community acclaims a man when he has had the courage to do his duty.

JOSEFINA. And to whom do you owe this triumph, Santiago? Who gave you advice?

SANTIAGO. You—yes, you—one way or the other, but you always gave me advice! Now we shall have to wait for them

to clear the arena. It seems incredible that they could have thrown so many things in such a little while.

MANOLO. My only regret is that no one was hit.

MARQUIS. The bull is cooling off.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Poor Campos! They won't give him a chance.

The CLERK enters.

SANTIAGO. What is the matter?

CLERK. A telegram for Your Excellency.

SANTIAGO. Here! Give it to me.

JOSEFINA. From Madrid?

SANTIAGO. Yes. You open it, Manolo. I am so nervous. Everything upsets me to-day.

MANOLO. The reply. Just as I thought. [*Reading*] "Crisis imminent. Ministry more strongly liberal."

SANTIAGO. Eh?

MANOLO. "Government refuses to accept resignation. Congratulates you upon your liberal campaign and offers governorship of the first class."

SANTIAGO. Of the first class! Josefina!

MARQUIS. Felicitations.

POLITO. Best wishes!

SANTIAGO. Embrace me! And you! And you!

He embraces all the ladies.

JIMENA. We didn't come for nothing after all.

JOSEFINA. You see how it is! If it hadn't been for me, where would you have been? And yet you allowed yourself to doubt, yes, perhaps even to suspect me! If you only knew what I have gone through with for you!

SANTIAGO. And I for you! But doubt you? Believe those calumnies? Never, Josefina! Never!

JOSEFINA. Now you talk like a man. I knew that some day you would do me justice.

POLITO. Of the first class! Of the first class! Come! Come! We must celebrate. Some wine!

SANTIAGO. Bring wine!

TEODORO. [*Entering the box*] We must celebrate with you. We are all one now; there are no divisions among us any more. [*All laugh*] What a bevy of beautiful ladies! And here's to you! [*They drink. General laughter.*]

MARQUIS. The ring is clear. Campos is after the bull.

ALL. The bull! The bull!

TEODORO. A fine pass.

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Did you see him turn? What a feint! Again! Again! I shall go out of my head!

POLITO. Now he'll show us.

SANTIAGO. The critical moment.

JIMENA. *Ay! Ay! Ay!*

ALL. Hurrah! Hurrah! Dead without a struggle! Bravo! Bravo!

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. How was that? How was that? [*Applause. Voices: "What's the matter with you?" "Hi, there!" "Wake up!"*] What is the matter? What are you waiting for? Stand up!

SANTIAGO. I? Stand up? Ah! What an afternoon! What a festival! A people that within half an hour hisses me, applauds me, shouts *vivas* in the name of liberty, acclaims a bull-fighter, cheers the ladies, then falls to hissing and then to applaud again—oh! how is such a people to be governed by mere man?

MANOLO. Nothing could be easier. Like ladies and *toreros*, the people cannot be governed; they must be entertained.

MARQUIS. Don Santiago! The second bull!

SANTIAGO. Great heaven! It may spoil everything. Ah, Manolo, in my emotion I forgot to thank you! Whatever

my destiny, wherever I may be, I want you always to remain with me, I want you always to be at my side.

MANOLO. Don Santiago!

SANTIAGO. I can never repay you. In these days of trial, you have been the real governor, you, you have taken my place.

MANOLO. Don Santiago!

Uproar. Cries in the arena.

MARQUIS. The second bull!

They re-enter the box. Applause. SANTIAGO gives the signal.

MANOLO. [To JOSEFINA, who remains below] Well, are you satisfied? Do I deserve your confidence, your respect?

JOSEFINA. I don't know.... You torment me, you....
[Trumpets] *Ay!* What a shock!

MANOLO. You are nervous.

JOSEFINA. I am nervous, I confess it. I don't know how to thank you. You have sacrificed, you are about to sacrifice so much for me—your future, your....

MANOLO. My future? It is for you to decide. Shall I return to Madrid? Shall I accept the offer of Don Santiago?

JOSEFINA. What shall I say?

MARQUIS. A hit! A hit! Ha! A home thrust!

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. Josefina!.... Bravo! Bravo! Break away! Break away!....

JOSEFINA. Accept—

MARCHIONESS OF TORRELODONES. I wonder what that fellow is up to?

Tremendous applause. Ovation. "Music! Music!"

Curtain

AUTUMNAL ROSES

COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

FIRST PRESENTED BY THE COMPAÑÍA GUERRERO-MENDOZA
AT THE TEATRO ESPAÑOL, MADRID, ON THE EVENING
OF THE THIRTEENTH OF APRIL, 1905

CHARACTERS

ISABEL

MARÍA ANTONIA

CARMEN

LAURA

JOSEFINA

LUISA

GONZALO

PEPE

RAMÓN

MANUEL

ADOLPHE

A SERVANT

THE FIRST ACT

Salon in a house in Madrid, furnished with refinement and taste. As the curtain rises, GONZALO is speaking with a SERVANT.

GONZALO. Have my clothes at the club before seven. Should any letters arrive——

ISABEL *enters.*

ISABEL. Are you going out? Do not be long.

GONZALO. How is that?

ISABEL. You are the most irresponsible man I ever saw. Have you forgotten that María Antonia and Pepe are coming to dinner? And we have asked a few friends.

GONZALO. Do you know, it had quite slipped my mind?

ISABEL. Did you plan to dine out?

GONZALO. Yes, at the club. I have some business with Aguirre and his partner in reference to that affair at Bilbao. I must drop him a line. [*To the SERVANT*] You may wait.

[*He seats himself and begins to write.*]

ISABEL. I hope you are not disappointed?

GONZALO. No, although I am sorry I did not think of it before. I am in no humor for company this evening.

ISABEL. We expect only a few—in fact, scarcely any one but the family.

GONZALO. Who is coming?

ISABEL. María Antonia and Pepe, Laura, Ramón and Carmen with their daughter, besides Manuel Arenales. I have asked your correspondent's son and his wife, the bride and groom, as well. The dinner is in their honor, so that makes it more formal. I am surprised that you should forget it.

GONZALO. The bride and groom? Ah, yes! I remember I am so sorry.

ISABEL. Perhaps you will conceal your feelings, as you almost prostrated yourself to entertain them when they first arrived in Madrid; the change would come as too much of a shock—although I never cared for them myself. He seems foolish, and she—well, she is too forward. To convince us that she talks Spanish, she employs the most objectionable language.

GONZALO. May I have a moment? I have made two slips already

ISABEL. I beg your pardon. You should have said so.

GONZALO. [*To the SERVANT*] Take this letter to the club. Never mind the clothes. Lay them out in my room. [*The SERVANT withdraws*] At what hour do we have dinner?

ISABEL. At half after seven—half an hour earlier than usual, so as to accommodate the young Parisians. In Paris they dine early. When Arenales drops in at about nine, that French girl will say that all Spaniards have bad manners.

GONZALO. What French girl?

ISABEL. The bride. A foolish question to ask!

GONZALO. She is not French. Besides, I consider it bad taste to call people names. No one could be more thoroughly Spanish—she has lived in Paris all her life, so that I find her intelligent, indeed especially delightful.

ISABEL. I had no idea that you felt so strongly.

GONZALO. Nonsense. Do we have to go through this all over again?

ISABEL. All over again? How about me? How do you suppose I feel?

GONZALO. You are a martyr of course; this is intolerable.

ISABEL. Gonzalo, you are not willing to let me say a single word. You don't like it if I am silent, either.

GONZALO. No, I prefer to have you talk—talk all the time, only be direct about it; don't insinuate. I know why you don't like that girl: it is because you think I am fond of her; you think that I am in love with all women.

ISABEL. Not all women.

GONZALO. No doubt you would be happier if I possessed the manners of a boor. Laura is the only woman you are willing to receive in the house; in your eyes, apparently, she is perfectly safe.

ISABEL. You will never fall in love with Laura. She is too fond of you.

GONZALO. I seem to have heard that story before.

ISABEL. It is truer than most of your stories.

GONZALO. Yes, my stories! Don Juan Tenorio! No woman is safe in my hands. Don't you see that your jealousy only makes us both ridiculous? We are not children; I was not a child when I married you—I was a widower when I was a mere boy; I have a married daughter. Nobody imagines that I was looking for a nurse when I proposed to you, like most widowers who have children. If my heart had been so fickle and flighty, why should I have married again? What good would it have done me?

ISABEL. None; except that you had set your heart on it.

GONZALO. On what?

ISABEL. There was no other way with me.

GONZALO. You could have refused me if that was your opinion of me; you had another way.

ISABEL. I thought that you loved me.

GONZALO. Loved you? Don't I love you?

ISABEL. Yes, you do. It is very easy to love me.

GONZALO. Why are you so fascinated with the rôle of martyr? Do you think it becoming?

ISABEL. I don't know; it is very trying. The hardest

thing about it is trying not to show how hard it is. Your only excuse is that you don't know how much you make me suffer.

GONZALO. Although some day I am likely to find out. I am a tyrant, a monster, an evil genius—I, a poor, inoffensive gentleman, who thinks of nothing but his business, his wife, his daughter, his home, who never cared for nor even dreamed of anything else!

ISABEL. As for myself, I say nothing, because I am used to it. But you owe something to your daughter—yes, our daughter—I love her as much as if she were mine. I suppose you think that she is wedded to the rôle of martyr like I am, when she has everything in the world to make her happy?

GONZALO. María Antonia? Never! That is, unless. . . . But no, you would be incapable. . . .

ISABEL. Yes, Gonzalo, and it is not her fault either; it is yours, her husband's—men's. You are as God made you, or else as opportunity has, or as bad as the law will allow, for you have made it yourselves. It is as lenient with your faults as it is intolerant of ours.

GONZALO. Are we elevating the discussion to a moral and philosophical plane? It is time to dress. I cannot afford to get into any worse humor.

ISABEL. You certainly cannot. Don't you care to hear about your daughter?

GONZALO. But what am I to hear? That she is jealous of her husband, as you are of me, and upon precisely the same grounds. I am sorry for poor Pepe.

ISABEL. However, María Antonia is right, and it is my duty to warn you. I talk to her exactly as you do to me, although you will never believe it; I tell her that it is of no consequence, that Pepe is neither better nor worse than other husbands; it is no disgrace and nothing to feel badly about, anyway.

GONZALO. Do you talk like that to María Antonia? It does seem incredible.

ISABEL. I not only talk to her, I convince her. María Antonia is not a woman of ray disposition; she is excitable, her temperament is not one to resign itself. Besides, she does not love her husband as I do you. She was in love with another man when she married.

GONZALO. Whom she might just as well have married; there was no objection. I never was able to understand why she broke off with Enrique so suddenly. His mother and you had your heads together by the hour; then María Antonia made up her mind that she did not love him overnight, and the boy left Madrid. The ways of women are inexplicable.

ISABEL. Ignorance is your invariable excuse. Do you mean to tell me that there was no obstacle to the marriage of your daughter with Carmen's son?

GONZALO. I thought that was coming. Now I have been too friendly with Carmen. I explained how that was; that was before we were married—in fact, before I was a widower.

ISABEL. Which is a great comfort to me. Yes, Carmen is my most intimate friend. She has suffered dreadfully, and her confession was not only more sweeping, it was far more sincere than yours. She has told me everything; she could not rest until she made me promise by all that was dear to me, to spare no effort to persuade María Antonia to give up Enrique, while she did whatever she could to influence her son.

GONZALO. Why, does she think——

ISABEL. She was not sure. Prejudice and the law are very well, but we cannot avoid the consequences of our acts, wholly irrespective of sex. A man may doubt what children are really his, but a woman never knows whether her chil-

dren's brothers and sisters may not become their husbands and wives. Did you know that you had made your daughter very unhappy? A trifling matter may become of importance; thoughtlessness has its results. But I am sorry that I told you—I intended to keep this to myself, but I was afraid for your daughter's sake, and little by little, without meaning it, I have let you see what was in my heart, I have told you everything, because I am afraid, yes, afraid, that you may mistake my resignation for indifference; for if you only knew how deeply it hurts me whenever I detect that uneasy look in your eye or discover a fresh insincerity—and I always do discover them—you are not good at deceit, you are too jauntily insolent—ah, you have no idea how you make my heart bleed, or you would never again be so cruel as to torment me! But that is how you are. If you don't hear the cry, you do not realize that you have inflicted the wound; unless you see my tears, you cannot believe that my life is unhappy.

GONZALO. [*Deeply affected*] Isabel! Why, Isabel!—Come, come! This is no way to dress for dinner.

ISABEL. No, it is foolish to complain. But I have suffered so much, and now——

GONZALO. Now? What do you mean?

ISABEL. You know what I mean. I am not blind. I can see what you are thinking about.

GONZALO. Business, my affairs— How ridiculous!

ISABEL. No, you take your business very calmly, but now you are irritable; your mood changes hourly, not daily. I love you too much not to know that you are disappointed when you seem happiest, or happy when you wish me to believe that you are sober and dignified.

GONZALO. Pure imagination! However, I have no right to complain. You knew my life as a bachelor.

ISABEL. As a married man.

GONZALO. I married very young....

ISABEL. As a widower.

GONZALO. I was a very young widower.

ISABEL. It made no difference to you.

GONZALO. Difference? But then I married you. How was it then?

ISABEL. Gonzalo, let us not pursue the matter further. I made up my mind long ago to shut my eyes, neither to hear nor to see; but I have seen and heard—everything. Why will you raise questions when you know inevitably that you must lie out of them? I detest nothing so much as a lie.

GONZALO. When did I ever lie to you? Who told you my adventures?

ISABEL. You did; I admit it—but not in confidence. It was imprudence.

GONZALO. Imprudence is a species of confidence.

The SERVANT enters.

SERVANT. The mail from the club, sir. *[Goes out.]*

GONZALO. Circulars, advertisements.... Hello! A note from Aguirre. He cannot dine with me this evening. Suppose I had gone? I should have enjoyed myself.

ISABEL. You are enjoying yourself.

GONZALO. But this? What is this? Ah, yes! I remember.... Here, run through them if you like. Look them over....

ISABEL. Thank you. I said you were imprudent, not that you were a fool. Of course, there is nothing in those letters; I am not a fool, either. It is not necessary to compromise oneself in a letter in order to make an appointment or to cancel one in case of need. All these communications are as innocuous as the tailor's announcement of the season's

styles, or a circular letter from the President of the Council, presenting his compliments and soliciting your vote. They are precisely as innocent.

GONZALO. I must give you credit for ingenuity, which, on the whole, is extremely flattering. When I feel older, mentally and physically, every day, to find that at my age you still consider me fascinating—it is delightful!

ISABEL. No, fascinated, which is not the same. Your vanity is your undoing, as it is with all men. So why be vain? You are spoiled from the cradle. Parents, relatives and friends, down to the last gossiping old crone who is attached to the house, all flatter you: "What a cunning little dear!" "And how manly!" So the poor boy is lured on. I was always sent out of the room when I was a girl, when they began to talk about you.

GONZALO. You hid behind the door and listened to every word.

ISABEL. I was so inexpressibly shocked that I hated all men because I thought they were like you.

GONZALO. All men but me, apparently. I made love to you before we were married.

ISABEL. And I boxed your ears.

GONZALO. You did, and it was tremendous! I never forgot you. And I don't believe that you ever forgot me, either. I was your sweetheart from that hour.

ISABEL. I was as great a fool as you say.

GONZALO. It is not easy to forget me.

ISABEL. Oh, how I wish you were bald and gray-haired, with crows'-feet about your eyes, and a paunch to make you respectable! I pray God for one every day—I give you warning. But nothing happens. Apparently, you are the devil's, and at forty——

GONZALO. Come, come! Stop at forty!

ISABEL. You are a gay deceiver. Do you know, I suspect your hair and mustache. . . .

GONZALO. No, upon my word of honor! A shampoo, a shampoo!

ISABEL. The hair-dresser's art has made rapid progress. I wish you would teach me the secret. If that color were natural, it would be an insult.

GONZALO. Would you really like to see me old?

ISABEL. So old that no woman would ever look at you again, so ugly that they would all laugh when you attempted to presume. Then at last I could say: He is mine, thank God, all mine!

GONZALO. But whose am I? What other woman has ever been able to call me hers, before God and before man, and in my own heart? Only you, my Isabel! [*He kisses her.*]

ISABEL. You don't know how I love you, nor how you make me suffer!

MARÍA ANTONIA and PEPE enter.

PEPE. Applause! Bravo! Bravo!

GONZALO. Hello!—

ISABEL. Why, María Antonia!

MARÍA ANTONIA. Isabel. . . .

PEPE. But we interrupt. Go on, go on!

GONZALO. We were setting you an example, which, needless to say, was unpremeditated, as we did not see you coming. You surprised us, as it were, although these little episodes are not unusual with us, otherwise it would have been surprising had you happened on one of them. My dears, unless a man is married, unless he has children, he does not know what true love means, absolutely he does not. This is happiness. There is nothing else like it.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Papa is in fine humor.

ISABEL. [*Aside to MARÍA ANTONIA*] Yes, since the mail arrived from the club. Fortunately, it was the last one.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Poor Isabel! Isn't it terrible to be a woman?

ISABEL. No indeed. How silly!

MARÍA ANTONIA. I am awfully anxious to see you alone.

GONZALO. By the way, Pepe, we must have a serious talk.

PEPE. Name your own time.

GONZALO. Oh, there is no hurry! That reminds me: what was that play you recommended the other evening? I dropped in as I was passing the theatre, but I did not see the girl. It seemed to me rather tame.

PEPE. She has been out of the cast for a few days. The manager discharged her because of some trouble, although I must say that I sympathized with the girl. Her parts were impossible. La Vélez has the company completely under her thumb, although she sings like a cat and wears clothes——

GONZALO. She will never make a hit with her clothes.

PEPE. We might compare notes, however, about the other one. The town has gone mad over her—it is a hit every time she appears. She has—how shall I put it? Oh, you know—personality; there is something about her....

GONZALO. I know. You talk like the girl's mother.

PEPE. Was that what you wanted to say?

GONZALO. No; speaking seriously, Isabel thinks.... We might take it up later. Did you say she was still out of the cast?

PEPE. No, you can see her any night in "Impulse" and "A League of the Garter," the second and fourth *zarzuelas*. Highly sensational.

GONZALO. I suppose you drop in every night?

PEPE. No, when I have nothing else to do.

GONZALO. But you never do anything else. You are mak-

ing a great mistake. Women are hypersensitive about the theatre; it is so public. I never specialized in theatres myself; I do not recommend them to others.

MARÍA ANTONIA. What is papa telling Pepe?

ISABEL. He is calling him to account. It was only right that he should know.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Who? Papa? You ought never to have told him. He will think that I am silly.

ISABEL. You would be silly, if you were not right; and you are foolish to be unhappy because you are. The silliest thing in the world would be for you to make your husband unhappy.

MARÍA ANTONIA. I am not making my husband unhappy.

ISABEL. But what is the matter? What are you trying to do?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Do you suppose that I married to be humiliated and neglected by my husband?

ISABEL. Has he done anything else?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Has he? Only to-day—

ISABEL. Hush! They may hear us....

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, wait until we are alone....

PEPE. I must step out for a moment, my dear; I hope to return shortly—that is, if I can slip away.

ISABEL. Oh! Don't you know whether you can return or not? Aren't you going to stay to dinner?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Of course he is not.

PEPE. I shall do my best—if possible....

MARÍA ANTONIA. What is the use of this farce? You know perfectly well that you are not coming back.

PEPE. María Antonia!

GONZALO. I think, perhaps, you take these matters too seriously. I understand his position. In fact, I feared for a moment that I might be prevented from dining with you myself. Women have an idea that men have nothing to do

but keep engagements which they make for them. They plan and settle it all beforehand, days ahead; such a night we go to the theatre, such an evening we have guests to dinner. A man cannot be expected to burden his mind with these petty details. You are the very first to find fault with us when we neglect our business or our other affairs, yet you expect us always to be sitting at home, waiting on your pleasure. I cannot understand women; positively, I cannot understand them.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, women are all unreasonable. Nobody understands them. He has known perfectly well since Monday that we were to dine here this evening, yet he must select this very evening—

PEPE. Don't you want me to go? Very well, then, I won't go; I am perfectly agreeable.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, you are! You are going just the same. I insist upon it. I don't care to have you sitting around all evening if this is what you are going to look like.

PEPE. Whether I go or not, I shall make it a point to provide a little opportunity, shortly, for you to look pleasant.

MARÍA ANTONIA. It will take a great deal to make me look like you do now.

PEPE. Whenever I turn around, it seems I am responsible.

ISABEL. You are two children.

PEPE. Why didn't you tell me that you had prepared this little scene before we left home?

MARÍA ANTONIA. You can stop it by leaving if you don't like it—and the sooner the better. If you had let me come alone, as I wished, you would have avoided it altogether.

PEPE. I didn't want Isabel and your father to think. . . .

MARÍA ANTONIA. What do you care what they think? Papa always sides with you, and Isabel has too much sense to interfere.

GONZALO. I am at a loss to know how you can say that. I side with him because he is right; I put myself in his place.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Exactly! In his place.

GONZALO. Yes, in his place—why not? I am sure that Pepe would remain to dinner unless some very important engagement took him away.

MARÍA ANTONIA. No doubt it seems important to him, which is sufficient. Why does a broker have to be present at a reading of a *zarzuela*?

PEPE. I told you the author is a friend of mine and it is my idea, substantially. I know the manager. Great heaven, can't a man go to the theatre? I must have some relaxation after a long and tiring day. If I had had my way, I should have been an actor, and I might have written plays, too, if I had had time, which would not have been worse than other popular successes. I have plenty of ideas—original ideas—and I never make a mistake as to what will prove acceptable. One rehearsal is ample for me to judge. If I were a manager, I should make money, naturally.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Who ever heard of such foolishness? All he thinks of is the theatre—a theatre.

PEPE. A theatre, a theatre! Yes, because the manager is a friend of mine.

ISABEL. Pepe, I had no idea that you were so fond of the theatre.

PEPE. It is my hobby—as innocent a hobby, I suppose, as a man could well have. Don't you agree with me?

GONZALO. All hobbies are innocent, although I must say I had supposed that you had some better reason for not remaining to dinner.

MARÍA ANTONIA. You see that even father deserts you. The reading must be important if they want to have you at it.

PEPE. I shall return immediately. I will ask my friends to postpone it until another day, or else go on without me. Unless I hurry, I shall be late. . . . What is the matter? Don't make a scene. God knows nothing could be more unpleasant!

GONZALO. [*Aside to PEPE*] Yes, hurry as much as you can, you may slip away later. We shall not sit long at table, as I have an engagement myself. Better humor María Antonia.

PEPE. I shall be back directly—directly, I promise you.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Suit yourself.

PEPE. Good-by, then. Now don't make up any stories about me.

MARÍA ANTONIA. I shall not make up any stories.

PEPE. Isabel, make it all right with María Antonia. You know how it is. . . .

ISABEL. Of course, although if you are not coming back, I advise you to say so.

PEPE. No, I am coming—on my word of honor! Directly! [*Goes out.*]

GONZALO. Now you can tell us the truth. Isabel says that you are unhappy, that you are dissatisfied with your husband. How is that? Have you any ground for complaint?

MARÍA ANTONIA. No, none whatever. I was joking with Isabel. It amuses me to see how fond Pepe has suddenly become of the theatre. Because his friend Castrojeriz, who is keeping some soprano or other, wants to exhibit his mistress in public and ruin himself as a manager, is no reason why Pepe should haunt the playhouse day and night. He isn't the prompter or leader of the orchestra. Now we have a steady stream of actors running to the house asking for recommendations, to say nothing of authors who want a good word said for their plays. Only yesterday, I re-

ceived an applicant for the chorus, chaperoned by her mother....

ISABEL. How exciting!

MARÍA ANTONIA. She insisted upon the girl's singing the *romanza* from "The First Officer."

GONZALO. If that was all, it was not so bad, though no doubt it was trying. You must remember that Pepe has seen very little of the world. His father brought him up very strictly; he was put to work when he was a mere boy. Naturally, he is interested in these light girlish frolics. An opportunity has offered to peep behind the scenes in a theatre—behind the scenes, just imagine it! And up to that time the boy had seen practically nothing. He was delighted, as was to be expected. A great many thoroughly respectable persons who have no connection with the theatre professionally, spend their time about the dressing-rooms and behind the scenes, studying the performances and observing what goes on at rehearsals. When we wish our own doctor, for example, we always send to the theatre for him, and his diagnoses have become purely theatric. If nothing is the matter, he says: "Pshaw! A performance will do you good to-morrow evening." If it is serious, he says: "This is too bad! I advise you to remain away from the opening." And our doctor is a sober and dignified man, a gentleman, and a fine physician.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Do not exert yourself to convince me. I knew, of course, that you were going to side with Pepe.

GONZALO. My point is that if you wish to prevent him from taking his relaxation away from home, and from you, sulking and complaining and making it thoroughly unpleasant is about the worst system you could adopt for the purpose.

ISABEL. Your father is right about that.

GONZALO. Are you jealous? Do you suspect that he is deceiving you?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Suspect? Not at all; he is not deceiving me. I made up my mind before I married, exactly what I would do when the time came—and I proved it.

ISABEL. It is foolish to make up one's mind in advance or to map out a course of action in life. We become wedded unconsciously to the attitude which we expect to assume, and the event often happens because we expected it. Never decide anything in advance. Life takes us by surprise, and determines the future without our advice, and life is always wise and always just. We may be deceived and betrayed, it may even seem that our lives have been wrecked completely, yet if we can truly say with a clear conscience that it was undeserved, we are happier by far than those who brought misfortune upon us. The only sorrow for which there is no consolation is the sorrow we have brought upon ourselves.

GONZALO. She is perfectly right. Remember what she says. Gracious! It is time to dress. The guests will think that they are attending a funeral.

MARÍA ANTONIA. No, it was foolish of me to complain. I was very silly. I ought to be—and I intend to be—happy.

GONZALO. I see no reason why not. [Goes out.]

MARÍA ANTONIA. Why did you say anything to papa? I did not wish him to know.

ISABEL. Am I closer to you than your own father?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Certainly. You understand how I feel. A man's point of view is entirely different. A love-affair means so little in their lives, and they put so little heart in it, that they imagine that it means even less to us. But they are mistaken. I can understand how a great love, an irresistible passion, might sweep everything before it, until the

pain, the anxiety, and the humiliation of the woman might count as nothing and be forgotten—for this a man might have some excuse; but when he does not hesitate to give a woman pain merely to gratify a passing caprice, that is inexcusable; it shows exactly what men think of us.

ISABEL. Has Pepe?...

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, he has; and his unfaithfulness is more cowardly because it began at a time when of all others I was most deserving of his respect, if not as his wife, as the mother of his child. Who knows but that the horrible mortification of his cowardly, cruel behavior, may not have been the cause of our terrible sorrow? And all for a low, vulgar woman, who is the attraction which he finds in the theatre!

ISABEL. Oh! So she is the one?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, and he thinks I suspect nothing. His friend, Castrojeriz, wheedles his money out of him to pay the expenses of his theatre. We shall be ruined and become public laughing-stocks at one and the same time, which I can never submit to, I promise you. I have not your patient disposition.

ISABEL. My patient disposition?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, poor Isabel! You are like my own dear mother, as good and as patient as she. Life has had no secrets for me since I was a child. I was brought up alone with my father, or rather without him, for I seldom saw him at all. Nurses and servants did not hesitate to gossip when I was present, nor spare me the details of what they had heard. Aunt Rosario was the only person who really cared for me, and her affection consisted chiefly of an implacable hatred of my father. She was my mother's sister, so she could never forgive him. Her undying hate took no thought of my innocence, she never considered the harm which she did me by destroying my respect for my father,

and the faith which I had in his love. She even carried her resentment beyond the grave, and when she died she put into my hands my mother's letters, which she made me promise never to open until I had married myself.

ISABEL. What was in those letters?

MARÍA ANTONIA. They were terrible beyond words. My mother's life was torment and hell. When you see them, you will understand why I cannot confide in my father. So I open my heart to you, and cry my eyes out in bitterness when I realize that I have thrown myself away upon a contemptible cur, who, like all men, is a deceiver.

ISABEL. Not like all men.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Then let me believe that all men are like him, because I should be even more unhappy than I am if I thought that there was one who was not.

ISABEL. Why? Are you keeping something back? . . . Are you trying to deceive me? This bitterness seems more like rebellion than regret, and I am frightened by it. I know that you loved another man before you did Pepe, you loved him with your whole soul. . . . It may be, as you say, that life has never had any secrets from you since you were a child, yet perhaps you have never understood why you were obliged to give him up, perhaps you have never been able to forget. . . .

MARÍA ANTONIA. No, I understood. How could I help but understand? I accepted your reasons without question. It was not necessary for Enrique to go away in order to induce me to forget him.

ISABEL. If that is true, you are in love with another man! He pursues, he torments you—and you struggle to defend yourself. Who is he? No, you need not tell me—I know who he is. His name has been too frequently upon your lips for me not to guess where the danger lies. But you cannot believe in his love! You could not be so false to yourself,

although in the bitterness of disillusionment you may feel that revenge is the only relief. You will not do it, because you believe in your mother and you believe in me. You have faith in us both—she is in heaven, and I am still here at your side. If you have read your mother's letters, you understand what my life is; we have both borne the same sorrows. Yours cannot be greater, so do not let your resignation be less.... Dry your eyes; here comes Laura. She will see that we have been crying.

LAURA enters.

LAURA. My dear Isabel! María Antonia....

ISABEL. How effective! Your new gown is most striking.

LAURA. Do you really like it? The taste of my maid. I have not had a moment to look in the glass. This has been a terrible day for me—seven hours spent in a coach, which I paid for myself, all for the love of my fellow man.

ISABEL. Are you still so active in benevolent work? You belong to all the charitable societies.

LAURA. I am vice-president of two, secretary of three, and treasurer of four, which goes without saying. The most difficult assignments invariably fall to me. "As you have no family, Laura, no children to take care of".... "As you have nothing to occupy your time".... They forget that I have children on all sides of me, while the whole world is my family, and I feel responsible for them all. I console myself as best I may for the misfortune—or the crime—of remaining single.

ISABEL. Gracious! In your case it has been neither a misfortune nor a crime. One home and one family were not enough for you; you have embraced a wider field.

LAURA. A vulgar misapprehension. I keep house myself; I am a model housekeeper. I need scarcely remind you of the demands society makes upon my time.

ISABEL. No, you go everywhere; I admire you for it.

LAURA. I am not narrow-minded like——

MARÍA ANTONIA. Like us, you were going to say?

LAURA. No, like most women. From the woman's point of view, home and family are of first importance, as is proper; on the other hand, it is not well to be excessively domestic. If I had married, I should have urged my husband on to glorious exploits, instead of intimidating and holding him back, as do most women, including yourselves.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Including us?

LAURA. Yes, including you. A man of your father's ability and social position ought to amount to something; he should have had his fill by this time of being cabinet minister, or whatever it is that he would like most to be. Do you know what has always been lacking in your father's life? A woman.

MARÍA ANTONIA. We had had a different idea.

LAURA. A woman who should be as unwomanly as possible. Exceptional men cannot be loved like ordinary men. Love watches beside genius as beside a sick bed, in silence and at a respectful distance, waiting until the patient calls, and is satisfied. To pester such a man with attentions or domestic trivialities is a crime, if you will pardon the suggestion. When I came in, I scented at once domestic discord in the air. You have both been crying.

MARÍA ANTONIA. No, indeed—although memory brings tears to our eyes; we have no differences.

LAURA. You need not tell me. Was it serious? Has he had a letter? Or did your husband go out and neglect to tell you where he was going? Perhaps he stayed out too long. You have been quarrelling with your husband....

MARÍA ANTONIA. In any event, my conscience will never reproach me with ruining a genius, however much I may quarrel with my husband.

LAURA. I was not thinking of your husband. Pepe is a

nice boy, apt to learn; but that is all. Your father is an intelligent man; he has knowledge of the world, he has address. . . .

ISABEL. We realize it fully. All he lacks is inspiration, which I have been unable to supply.

LAURA. However, do not distress yourself. He has just been offered the direction of the new company in Paris, which, in fact, was his idea. It will control the world very shortly, because of the nature of its business, dominating the banks and consequently the politics and destinies of Europe, yet, instead of encouraging him to accept, you are in a panic for fear that, possibly, you may be obliged to move, to leave Spain.

ISABEL. María Antonia and I are not ambitious. We are sufficiently well-to-do to be able to afford the luxury of remaining here at home among our friends, and the associations which have always been ours. Gonzalo has accepted the chairmanship for Madrid, and is entirely satisfied.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, why go to Paris? Do you wish us to separate?

LAURA. Oh, go along. Your father might find Pepe employment in some confidential capacity.

MARÍA ANTONIA. My husband in Paris? No, thank you. His theatrical tastes have already been cultivated.

LAURA. Theatrical tastes? You surprise me.

ISABEL. María Antonia is very silly.

LAURA. How absurd! I suppose you are jealous because your husband has attended the theatre once or twice, and one of your friends has had the bad taste to mention it. Ridiculous!

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, I am ridiculous, I am jealous, and I am a woman! I should like to have my husband stay at home alone by me, and be satisfied. I have not the skill to make a Napoleon out of my husband, or a Bismarck, or any

other genius now in fashion. When he goes out and stays later than he should, it is no consolation to me to think that he may be conquering new worlds or conducting experiments in navigation.

CARMEN, LUISA and RAMÓN enter.

ISABEL. Carmen and her husband with Luisa.... Good evening, my dear! Luisita....

CARMEN. Do not tell us that we are late. Ramón insists we are to blame.

RAMÓN. Obviously. A woman's *toilette* is inexhaustible; it takes three hours for them to dress—to no purpose. Now they are trying to persuade me to subscribe for seats at the theatre. But what is the use? If I wish to see a play or hear an opera, I must leave them at home. We are lucky to arrive in time for the second act if they go. Isn't it foolish to spend a fortune not being on time?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Luisita, you are adorable this evening.

LUISA. Naturally—you heard papa; I have been three hours dressing. How he does love to exaggerate!

RAMÓN. Where is Gonzalo?

ISABEL. He is almost ready. What do you hear from Enrique?

RAMÓN. Nothing; he never writes. I cannot understand what is the matter with that boy.

CARMEN. [*Aside to ISABEL*] I am dreadfully worried; I must tell you about it later, Isabel. I don't want to disturb Ramón. You know what he is.

LAURA. Were you on the Exchange this afternoon?

RAMÓN. Yes, but there were no developments. It was unusually quiet.

LAURA. I must consult you about a plan which I am taking under consideration. It may be foolish—

RAMÓN. No, Laura, you are a competent judge; you are unquestionably capable of taking care of yourself.

LAURA. Yes, I have acquired the habit, thanks to your advice and friendly assistance.

CARMEN. Your talent for business has always been astonishing. The mere idea of business is appalling to me. If I were a widow, I am sure I should not have courage to make any advances, or to speculate upon the Exchange.

LAURA. I should have fared poorly had I shared your reluctance. What I had from my father was modesty itself, which would have disappeared long ago had I displayed no taste for affairs. Fortunately, I trusted my principal to Gonzalo and he has doubled my income with incredible rapidity.

RAMÓN. We hope to surprise you shortly now that the new company has been organized. The scope of the business has been broadened, and at the same time the foundations have been made more secure. We shall no longer be dealing in castles in the air.

LAURA. So I trust, as does everybody. I am enchanted with the prospect; it is entrancing. [*To ISABEL and CARMEN*] I am amazed that you do not take any interest in business.

RAMÓN. Yes, discuss business with a woman! My wife has preserved some notion of economy in the management of the house, as she knows what it means to begin, but Luisita, who was born in days of plenty, seems to believe that the sky rains down money. If she had her way, we should be ruined in less than two months.

LUISA. Do you wonder that I am not engaged? The young men listen to papa, and then decline absolutely to make advances.

RAMÓN. Engaged? Engaged? Show me the young man who has the hardihood to venture with one of these girls. Naturally, a young man's position is none too brilliant; he

is struggling to establish himself in his profession, or in business, and as yet he has not had time to inherit. Encumber yourself under these circumstances with a young lady who is accustomed to shine, and to spend money without any idea of what it costs to make it! A few years ago marriage meant a girl's first gown from the dressmaker, her first *lingerie* that was not the plainest of the plain; it meant her first jewelry that was of value and her introduction to society as well, and this was true even if she belonged to the uppermost classes; but now this is all changed. Marriage is a step down for a girl, it is to restrict herself, to have a poorer house, a worse table, inferior service; it is to ride in a hack or a trolley-car, instead of her own carriage; it is to remodel a dress ten times and a hat fourteen; it is to listen to her husband preach that she is spending too much money, that it is impossible to continue like this, and these things sound very differently from a husband than they do from a father. If there should be children, wives nowadays can only bring them up upon money. What with nurses and governesses and doctors at every turn, the infant does not have an opportunity to sneeze. A fortune is squandered upon laces and batistes, so as to accustom him to the refinements from the cradle, and I don't know what else besides—yes, a French priest to teach him to pray, because mothers cannot even do that nowadays. Show me the young man who is willing to marry upon a salary such as we pay men in Spain, and an income which we are pleased to call modest.

LUISA. Father seems to think that money is the supreme end of existence.

LAURA. And he is perfectly right. Money cannot make us happy, but it is the only compensation that we have for not being so.

GONZALO *enters*.

GONZALO. My dear Laura, I am delighted. . . . How are you, Carmen? And Luisita. . . . Hello, Ramón. Anything new? Are we making progress?

RAMÓN. Excellent.

LAURA. I am angry with you, because you have proved yourself an ingrate.

GONZALO. Ah, doubtless because I neglected to answer your last letter! You must not sell at the present figure under any circumstances. I should have placed myself at your disposition at once should you have done so.

LAURA. Remember, I have blind faith in you.

GONZALO. I fear that you are unduly confiding; I am not infallible.

LAURA. I should gladly face ruin, following you.

GONZALO. I should not feel any less guilty, even though you were following me.

LUISA. [*Aside to MARÍA ANTONIA*] Laura is mad over your father, but at least her attitude is perfectly open. How does Isabel tolerate it?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Oh, she is harmless! It is a platonic attachment, upon the Exchange. Laura breathes fire and passion into such prosaic questions as: "How is the foreign loan?" "Was it strong at the close?" "Quote me prices on redemption bonds." Fancy Romeo and Juliet discussing quotations upon the Bourse at the window, instead of debating whether it is the lark or nightingale which sings!

LUISA. What difference does it make? It would be a love scene just the same. No words are too prosaic to express what love means.

JOSEFINA and ADOLPHE enter.

MARÍA ANTONIA. [*To LUISA*] The young couple from Paris—on private view.

ADOLPHE. Ladies and gentlemen.... [To ISABEL] Ah, *madame!*

ISABEL. How do you do, Josefina?

GONZALO. Allow me to present our friends. Ramón, this is Adolphe Barona, our correspondent's son.

RAMÓN. Yes, yes indeed. His father is a great friend of mine. Great man, Barona!

GONZALO. His wife.—Introduce your wife and daughter.

RAMÓN. My wife, my daughter. Although we have not had the pleasure before, we may consider ourselves old friends. Your father is like a brother to Gonzalo and myself. We entered business together when we were boys.

ADOLPHE. I believe you did. Papa talks about you incessantly. Apparently you had rare sport in your day; you were up to—what is it?—tricks.

RAMÓN. Tricks?

ADOLPHE. Yes, *de....bêtises*. I mean you made damn fools of yourselves.

RAMÓN. You don't say so.

GONZALO. Although he speaks Spanish perfectly, without trace of foreign accent, as he has lived in Paris all his life he is unfamiliar at times with the precise meaning of words.

ADOLPHE. I always speak Spanish at home with papa; but the habit of thinking in French makes me commit—how shall I say? I cannot help it—*une gaffe*, Josefina, *une gaffe....*

JOSEFINA. You break badly. Is that what you say?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, that is what you say. [Aside to LUISA] Say and do.

GONZALO. Josefina speaks charmingly, like an unadulterated Madrileña.

JOSEFINA. Oh, please don't accuse me of anything quite so shocking, or your expectations may be forfeited.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Evidently Spanish has no secrets for her.

GONZALO. She is pure joy. Are you becoming more reconciled to Madrid?

RAMÓN. Don't you like it here?

JOSEFINA. Yes, it seems rather pleasant. We have made our formal calls and found everybody polite and agreeable.

ADOLPHE. Ah, very! But what wretched houses! There is an utter lack of comfort, of taste-- although yours is an exception.

ISABEL. You must not say that.

ADOLPHE. Ah, yes, indeed! It displays taste, a delicate, feminine touch, which is artistic, harmonious. Where was it that we saw a *salon empire* with paintings *Louis quinze*? Horrible! They were....how do you say, Josefin? *Un mélange*?

JOSEFINA. Upside down. Am I right?

MARÍA ANTONIA. You are. [*Aside to LUISA*] With whom has this girl been talking Spanish in Paris?

ADOLPHE. Such bad taste quite takes my nerve away. I find the *toilettes* of the ladies a trifle *criardes*.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Crude and loud.

ADOLPHE. Exactly--howling. What lady was it who received us in a blue tea-gown and a burst of gigantic yellow bows? I yearned to rip it off her.

JOSEFINA. Adolphe's temperament is so artistic.

ADOLPHE. Life would be sad without art. The *toilette* is half the woman. Surprising a rare *toilette* may in itself be a poem.

LUISA. [*Aside to MARÍA ANTONIA*] Which is the *madame* in this Parisian couple?

RAMÓN. [*Aside to GONZALO*] Is this the boy you wish to put at the head of our Madrid office?

GONZALO. I see no reason why not. He is highly intelli-

gent, as you will soon be convinced. He talks like this to please the ladies.

RAMÓN. In that case he is more of a fool than I thought. He shows absolutely no knowledge of women.

GONZALO. How should he?—after having been in business all his life under the eye of his father. The position requires no intelligence.

RAMÓN. It is one of great responsibility. When we already have Jiménez——

GONZALO. Jiménez is satisfied with the post which he occupies. How can we refuse Barona what he asks for his son?

RAMÓN. Asks for him? He asks nothing. He wrote me that his son was coming to Madrid on a pleasure-trip, on his honeymoon.

GONZALO. Well, the boy told me that his father's purpose in sending him was to obtain this position. It seems that he had contracted relations in Paris before his marriage with a woman of certain character, and it is not wise at present for him to reside there. His wife insists upon a change.

RAMÓN. Is that so? His wife—and yours, I suppose? I understand perfectly. The moment that she entered I saw that you were interested.

GONZALO. Absurd! I have no idea what you mean. Do you suppose that I would dare.... With a girl who has just been married? The wife of a son of my friend?

RAMÓN. Yes, yes, that makes a great difference to you.

GONZALO. Eh?

RAMÓN. I believe my wife is the only woman you have ever respected, and that is not because I trust you; I trust her.

GONZALO. Don't be a fool. To-morrow we shall present

his name at the meeting of the Junta together. A word will suffice.

LAURA. [*To ADOLPHE*] What is the opinion of Panama shares in France? I bought a number at a most flattering figure. Everybody agrees that I am long now on futures.

ADOLPHE. They are a dormant security—but with the water let in it, Panama will be a second Sucz. [*Noticing LAURA's earrings*] May I examine those pearls? They are exquisite. I have seen few of such clear lustre, and I am familiar with pearls. *Par excellence*, the pearl is the feminine jewel.

LAURA. I inherited these from my Aunt Leonor who left me the few jewels I possess. I regard it as wasteful to lock up money in jewels, where it is no longer liquid. They cost a fortune to buy, but when one comes to sell. . . .

JOSEFINA. I see that your disposition, like mine, is severely practical. My husband is quite the opposite. He has the soul of an artist; he spends all his money on things which are useless.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yet he has devoted his life to business, among men of affairs.

ADOLPHE. That is the reason I detest them so thoroughly. Ah! What is life without poetry, without an ideal?

JOSEFINA. We exchanged rôles, as you see, when we married.

MARÍA ANTONIA. [*To LUISA*] We were confused for a moment ourselves.

JOSEFINA. Life slips by Adolphe like a beautiful dream.

GONZALO. He is making a tremendous mistake.

JOSEFINA. Do you think so?

GONZALO. If he dreams, he must be asleep—not a proper attitude in a young husband.

JOSEFINA. Shocking! But men are never serious in Spain. Do you know, I am beginning to have my doubts about you?

GONZALO. About me?

JOSEFINA. Yes, I distrust your word. Have you urged Adolphe's appointment upon the directors, as you promised?

GONZALO. We were discussing it now. You may consider it assured.

JOSEFINA. Time will tell. I should be sorry to quarrel, but if you plan to take advantage of me....

GONZALO. Ha, ha!

JOSEFINA. Are you laughing? I warn you: you will be obliged to win your spurs in advance....

GONZALO. I was laughing at the turn of your speech.

JOSEFINA. Was it improper?

GONZALO. It was inviting.

JOSEFINA. But it is not safe to laugh at me. I find you are a deceiver who perverts the moral sense.

GONZALO. Adorable! You are adorable! What more could be wished?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Oh, how shamelessly brazen! She flirts with papa just as if this were a country which permitted divorce. And I must say her husband takes it calmly. Apparently he is explaining to Laura and Luisa the hang of a skirt.... How revolting!

RAMÓN. Isabel, I wish you would speak to your husband. He insists upon appointing this boy to a position of grave responsibility. I suppose he told you that he was recommended by his father? His father knows well enough by this time that the boy is a fool. He married him in a hurry to this girl, whose family and antecedents will not bear inspection, and packed him off to Madrid to settle down, but not in a position of such importance. Use your influence with Gonzalo.

ISABEL. I? Carmen knows me better. I should not dream of advising him, much less of opposing his wishes.

He might be never so sincerely affectionate, yet I should not believe one word that he said. To effect more than promises of reform, to be forgotten with the week, I should be obliged to do more than talk.

RAMÓN. Yes, but what do you do, Isabel?

ISABEL. I? Resign myself---and wait.

RAMÓN. Poor Isabel!

A SERVANT enters.

SERVANT. A letter for the señorita.

[Offering it to MARÍA ANTONIA.]

MARÍA ANTONIA. If there is an answer....

SERVANT. The messenger did not wait.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Very well. *[The SERVANT retires.]* FROM Pepe. There is no need to read it; he is not coming, of course.... I knew it, I expected it.

ISABEL. No, read it---

MARÍA ANTONIA. What is the use? You read it. Does he excuse himself?

ISABEL. Substantially. His friends refuse to let him come. The reading is important... .

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, yes, no doubt. Pass the letter around.

LUISA. Isn't your husband coming?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Here, take it and read it to your *fiancé* when you have one. It will serve him as a model after you are married. All men are alike.

LUISA. No, that is not true; I don't believe it. If you had only married Enrique---

MARÍA ANTONIA. Hush! Don't talk to me about Enrique, if you love me. Please! It hurts.

LUISA. My poor brother is so sad when he writes.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Sad? Yes, we are all sad. God forgive those wretched creatures who, for a moment's pleasure,

a caprice, for gratification of the sort in which my husband is now engaged, are willing to wreck the happiness of their dear ones for all the rest of their lives!

LUISA. I have not the faintest idea what you are talking about.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Oh, nothing! I am not talking.

MANUEL *enters*.

MANUEL. Good evening. Am I punctual? Ah, Isabel, you don't say so....

ISABEL. For once you are, and I appreciate it. We have guests this evening.

MANUEL. So I see. Present me.

ISABEL. Don Manuel Arenales, M. Adolphe Barona.... His wife.

MANUEL. A great pleasure, a very great pleasure!

GONZALO. At last you have met an unadulterated Madrileño. He is just up and beginning the day.

MANUEL. Have you any objection? Time is purely arbitrary. There is no reason why the day should begin with the sun. I am more gallant; I concede the privilege to the moon. I render homage to the eternally feminine.

LAURA. I have often been astonished to see you up early in the morning as I hurried to a lecture or a charitable affair.

MANUEL. Were you making your rounds so early? Well, I was returning from mine. One may easily judge who had the better start of the day.

LAURA. Silence! I despise you. You are a reproach to the state of bachelorhood. Of what use are you in the world?

MANUEL. A question, perhaps, that others might ask. To permit you to send me tickets every Monday and Tuesday for your benefits, and subscription-blanks for every manner of good works, to all of which I contribute most gladly, my

dear Laura, and believe me when I tell you that this is no joke.

LAURA. True. Through this tiny door, perhaps, we may succeed in saving your soul, and you find indulgence for your multitudinous sins.

MANUEL. So Pepe is not dining with us this evening?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Why? Did you see him?

MANUEL. Yes, a moment ago—

MARÍA ANTONIA. Where?

MANUEL. In the Calle de Alcalá.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Oh! With some friends?

MANUEL. No, he was alone.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Alone? Why, his note said. . . .

MANUEL. What did his note say?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Nothing.—Alone! Did you hear that? He was alone!

GONZALO. Be careful! Never see a married man anywhere unless his wife is along.

MANUEL. Careful? Because I said I met him alone on the street? Did you expect me to tell her that I saw him running up-stairs at the Restaurant Fornos with a party of friends—his friends, your friends, and mine?

GONZALO. Not mine, no! Do me that favor.

MANUEL. At least I suppose they were friends of yours. What woman is not your friend?

The SERVANT enters.

SERVANT. Dinner is served.

ADOLPHE. *Le dernier cri* this season runs the gamut of yellows: sulphur, lemon, orange, apricot—one may even wear yolk of an egg. . . .

RAMÓN. This fellow's conversation is limited to diet and clothes.

MARÍA ANTONIA. To diet, it seems, as applied strictly to clothes.

ISABEL. [*To GONZALO*] Gonzalo, I have placed the bride by you. Undoubtedly, she will introduce the question of her husband's appointment.

GONZALO. Do we have to go into that?

ISABEL. Ramón is against it. He will oppose it at the meeting of the Junta.

GONZALO. I thought that you were up to something.

ISABEL. I? I simply wish to prevent you from making a mistake; I am thinking about you, do you hear?—about you. What do I care? It is only another one, and I am used to it. However, do as you please—as you will.

Curtain

THE SECOND ACT

The scene is the same as in the First Act.

ISABEL, CARMEN and RAMÓN are discovered together, while the voices of the other characters are heard outside. A piano plays meanwhile.

RAMÓN. I have dined well, Isabel; I have dined extremely well.

ISABEL. It is a great pleasure to me.

CARMEN. Who is playing now? That cannot be Luisita.

ISABEL. No, it is the groom. He plays excellently, with rare feeling.

RAMÓN. Is that how you knew that it was not Luisita?

CARMEN. I marvel at that young man. His wife ought to be very happy.

RAMÓN. Well, she does not look happy to me.

ISABEL. Why? Ridiculous!

RAMÓN. Isabel, I am a blunt man. I have been able to swallow everything at this dinner except that couple. They stick in my throat.

CARMEN. Perfectly disgusting! I hope you don't mind what he says.

ISABEL. Antipathies, like sympathies, are instinctive.

RAMÓN. It seems incredible that that boy should be Barona's son—Barona, a man of affairs, a forceful, energetic character! To be sure he always complained of his wife, because she brought up his children badly. What sort of woman has this fellow married? Isabel, I am a blunt man——

CARMEN. Ramón! Be careful!

RAMÓN. Of what? We are as much at home as if this were our own family. Isabel is—what shall I say?—she is like a sister to me; I have sisters and brothers of whom I am not nearly so fond. And I am fond of Gonzalo, too. We have been in business together since we were boys; he has always been good to me. No doubt he has his faults, but what of it? Who has not? They do not interfere with me, so why should I complain? I must say, though, Isabel, that when Gonzalo knows what he does know about this young woman who has married herself to our correspondent's son, yes, to the son of our friend—and I know it, too—well, he has no right to introduce her into your house.

CARMEN. Ramón! Ramón!

RAMÓN. I know what I am talking about.

ISABEL. Do you suppose Gonzalo knows?

RAMÓN. Of course he does. This girl's mother is an impudent hussy, a Spaniard who ran off to Paris with a commercial traveller. The daughter went on the stage there—the stage, did I say? It was in a *café concert*. You can guess what she was. Then the mother and daughter set their caps for this fool. Here they are now posing as ladies under your protection and sitting beside our daughters; you ought not to consent to it—it is a thing Gonzalo has no right to do. That boy will never have that position if my vote counts for anything. I am very fond of you, Isabel, I do not need to tell you that; and I shall always take your part, whatever happens—always.

ISABEL. Thank you, Ramón, thank you very much. . . .

She rises and moves slowly toward the door, passing into the room where the others are talking.

CARMEN. I hope she has not forgotten that this is just after dinner. Otherwise, what will she think? Why do you bother poor Isabel?

RAMÓN. I suppose I said what I did because I have had too much champagne?

CARMEN. No, of course not. But I am sorry for poor Isabel.

RAMÓN. So am I. I am out of patience with Gonzalo; that is why I cannot hold my tongue. Nobody expects a married man to be as ideally faithful as his wife, but he ought to stray only occasionally, when it is of no importance. This notion of never being without a love-affair on his hands when he has a wife like Isabel. . . . How have you the effrontery to complain of me? Compare us, now compare us. . . .

CARMEN. I? Complain of you? Never!

RAMÓN. Yes, you do. Women's imaginations are too active; you are too much given to romance. Did you notice Isabel's martyred air? Well, she enjoys it; she likes to feel her husband is that way. All this talk about love-affairs, about women who have lost their heads over him, this never being certain whether he is hers or whether he is not, makes him important in her eyes and surrounds him with a poetic halo. Isabel is more in love with her husband every day, you can take it from me, which she would never be after having been married all these years if Gonzalo were a husband like I am—without accidents, or anything that is romantic. Come, now, be honest: have you ever appreciated my incredible fidelity in the least? You think it is not virtue, but lack of ability to make myself attractive. Yes, you do. You do not love me as Isabel loves Gonzalo. I am a simple bourgeois, all prose, who is good enough to work and to strike balances, and provide for the future of my children. Why, if some day some hussy should come along and turn my head—which God forbid—yes, if it were for no more than half an hour—I should feel all the while that I

was robbing you and the children, and I could never forgive myself, even though you might forgive me.

CARMEN. Yes, there are things which we can never forgive ourselves. But don't hurt Isabel. Surely she must have noticed that woman coquetting with her husband, when everybody else has noticed it.

RAMÓN. Coquetting? Coquetting? Well, I call it *cocotting*, and precious little pretense about it either. That is the only term that describes it.

CARMEN. Isabel again! . . . Change the subject.

ISABEL and MANUEL enter. CARMEN and RAMÓN converse together at one side, and presently disappear into the salon in which the others are supposed to be.

ISABEL. [To MANUEL] I must say that you are unob-servant. I have been pulling at your sleeve for the past half-hour, as a signal for you to follow me; but you were oblivious. I wish to speak with you.

MANUEL. Didn't you see María Antonia pulling me by the other sleeve as a signal for me not to follow? She also wishes to speak with me.

ISABEL. When it is a question between mother and daughter, although the heart may incline to youth, courtesy must sacrifice itself to age.

MANUEL. In this case, courtesy and the heart were of one accord, but María Antonia has a grip which is terrific. However, I remain in my part.

ISABEL. In your part? What is your part?

MANUEL. Don't you know, my friend? That of universal confidant, of everybody's friend, or rather the friend of everybody's friend. I am like a telephone central; people call me up in order to establish a connection. It is not a glorious rôle, as you must confess.

ISABEL. But how necessary!

MANUEL. Cervantes said something of the sort concerning an occupation very similar to mine; he said that it was necessary in any well-ordered republic.

ISABEL. I am not asking now for a connection; on the contrary, I wish to discontinue service.

MANUEL. What did I tell you? In any event, mine is an intermediary rôle.

ISABEL. Is Federico Reinosá, the author, one of your friends?

MANUEL. Do you mean the dreamer?

ISABEL. Infinitely more dangerous! Authors who write their dreams exhaust themselves in the process, but dreamers who never write but attempt to live out their dreams, neither rest nor give others any rest. Life to them is a blank page which they are at liberty to dash off at their pleasure.

MANUEL. Apparently you know Federico——

ISABEL. Yes, he is madly in love with María Antonia. I am told that you enjoy his confidence——

MANUEL. I merely offer him advice.

ISABEL. Good advice?

MANUEL. Naturally, as I am fond of María Antonia. I know the value of example and bringing-up, and María Antonia has never had anything but bringing-up, and examples of virtue in her mother and in you.

ISABEL. When virtue has always been touched with sadness in a girl's experience, is it likely that at twenty she will resign herself to a life of suffering, unless her love is so impassioned, so blind, that it is able to transform even sorrow into something more precious than joy?

MANUEL. True, María Antonia was not violently in love when she married. But Pepe is a nice boy. He may make a slip now and then——

ISABEL. Slip? María Antonia is wearing her heart out

because of his slips. I live in terror of slips, so I wish to prevent María Antonia from making any. She has the greatest confidence in you; besides, you are Federico's friend. Tell me honestly what you know. Does he speak much of María Antonia?

MANUEL. Incessantly; yes, indeed! He is in love with her madly.

ISABEL. But does he....

MANUEL. What are you asking me? I merely offer him good advice, which I do very easily by repeating for his benefit the precepts which I have urged so frequently upon myself.

ISABEL. I remember—in that great passion of your life, to which you remain faithful even yet. Then by your love for María Antonia's mother, which was all admiration and all respect, help me to protect her daughter, the daughter of the woman you so dearly loved!

MANUEL. And always did respect.

ISABEL. So the memory of her love has become the religion of your life. Would you have had it otherwise? I trust you entirely. I fear for María Antonia, it is useless to conceal it; there is something in her attitude which makes me apprehensive of the worst. Be fair with me, and warn me when there is danger. I love María Antonia as if she were my own child.

MANUEL. I am sure of it, but why worry? Federico has no reason to suspect my interest in this affair. He trusts me implicitly.

ISABEL. Thanks, my friend, my good and loyal friend.

MANUEL. The friend of everybody—always the friend. The world lives around me; men love, quarrel, suffer—and then they tell me about it. And so I live.

ISABEL. In the memory of a great love, which at least is something.

MANUEL. Only it was not love. It was merely a great friendship.

MARÍA ANTONIA *entre s.*

MARÍA ANTONIA. Are you whispering secrets?

ISABEL. Why are you running away? What are they doing in the other room?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Who cares? It does not interest me. Manuel, you forgot to finish that story; I found it extremely amusing.

ISABEL. What story?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Oh, an account of some pranks of Federico Reinosá's—eccentricities of an artist.

ISABEL. Does he still visit your house frequently?

MARÍA ANTONIA. No, he and Pepe had a falling out—some difference about art. They both became excited, and, needless to say, when Pepe becomes excited, he forgets himself completely.

ISABEL. Was Pepe the only one who forgot himself?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Federico is a perfect gentleman, who would be incapable of acting discourteously, as Manuel knows. [*To ISABEL*] Naturally, you have seen very little of him.

ISABEL. Although I have heard him talked about a great deal.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Is that so? By whom?

ISABEL. By you. I have hinted it several times, but it has escaped your attention. It may not have escaped everybody's.

MARÍA ANTONIA. It certainly has Pepe's. Pepe is an Othello when it is a question of one of his stage princesses, but when his wife is concerned, he is no better than any other husband. In his eyes I am so insignificant that he never bothers his head about me. If anybody were to tell him that

a man had fallen in love with me, he would simply know that it was impossible.

MANUEL. Don't you exaggerate? Now, really!

MARÍA ANTONIA. Oh, yes, yes, yes, I do! Of course any affection, any decent treatment even, is offensive to me! I am happy, exquisitely happy. You must have noticed how vivacious and communicative I have been all evening.

MANUEL. Yes, I did at once. I said to Isabel: "What is the matter with María Antonia? She seems so happy."

MARÍA ANTONIA. Blissfully happy!

ISABEL. A nervous sort of happiness—the pretended happiness with which, when we are not thinking of others in the first moments of a great sorrow, we attempt to deceive ourselves. It is a peculiarity of great sorrows; they strike so deep, so very deep into the heart that they seem to be buried in it, and we are horrified that we do not feel them; but the deception does not last long. They are graven there for the remainder of our lives. We shed tears in the beginning, we complain, we rage—then we resign ourselves and bear them with a smile, a sad and mournful smile, like a gaping wound which never heals.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Isabel has had experience both of wounds and of smiles.

Laughter outside.

MANUEL. They appear to be enjoying themselves.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Another hit of papa's! He is in rare form this evening. Look at him, surrounded by all the ladies in rapt adoration, from Carmen, who would have been a model wife had papa not crossed her path, to calculating Laura, who you would swear was completely monetized, and the bride, who may be a fool, although she has been married only two months—yes, and Luisa, even, bursting forth in her first evening-gown, there they all sit in ecstasy

before the eternal Don Juan. It is a picture too good to be missed. I tell Isabel that it is symbolic. Whatever happens to papa with the ladies is not entirely his fault.

MANUEL. No, take my word for it. Inspiring love is a gift; you must have it in you. The most fascinating men are the ones who are the most indifferent. Don Juan says:

“One day to enamour,
Two days to achieve.”

which, by the way, sounds wholly fantastic to me. One's name must be Tenorio to attain such success. Don Luis's conquests cost him double, while Avellaneda and Captain Centellas—but why pursue the matter further? Judging by appearances they never inspired love in their lives, which explains why they spent all their time betting upon their friends. I have always had a great deal of sympathy for those two characters.

CARMEN, LAURA, JOSEFINA, LUISA, GONZALO, RAMÓN
and ADOLPHE enter.

LAURA. We are in full flight before your husband. He has scandalized us outrageously.

MARÍA ANTONIA. While you fly, you still manage to keep up with him.

LAURA. He will scarcely repeat his sallies before you. What a remarkable man! Honestly, if it is put properly, I believe one may say anything.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Even if it is put improperly, if the speaker appears properly, one may listen to everything.

JOSEFINA. It is his air as he says it. I should never have believed that I could have laughed so much at those things.

MARÍA ANTONIA. [To MANUEL] She is of the sort who are accustomed to giggle.

ADOLPHE. Josefina, is the occasion propitious for my

imitations of Parisian actresses, or a monologue, perhaps, or *petite fantasie*?

JOSEFINA. No, these people are all respectable. Make an impression on the hostess; it may do us some good. Compliment her upon her *toilette*.

ADOLPHE. I have exhausted my stock of compliments.

JOSEFINA. Then see what you can do with Don Ramón, since he is a friend of your father's. I must say that he does not look it; he is not overenthusiastic. When I asked him to use his influence, you should have heard what he said to me!

ADOLPHE. *Hélas! Ma petite femme!* Our illusions fade rapidly.

JOSEFINA. And don't talk so much. I know what I am doing, and I shall get what I want—you can leave it to me.

ADOLPHE. Of course I can leave it to you. I leave everything to you. [*They continue the conversation.*]

GONZALO. [*To CARMEN*] Do me the favor to persuade Ramón to support this young man for the position. The future of a loving couple is at stake. It is in our power to contribute to their happiness, and you who are so good—

CARMEN. Please, Gonzalo! I have no idea whether or not you are in earnest, but you must not involve me in your affairs, whether in jest or in earnest. I can only tell you that you are doing wrong, you are doing very wrong, Gonzalo—and you always have done wrong.

GONZALO. Will you never forgive me?

CARMEN. I have forgiven you, but I can never forgive myself. In spite of my feelings, I am obliged to receive you as a friend because we are not alone in the world. When you married Isabel, I confessed to her, so that I might feel myself a little less unworthy of her friendship. I had not offended against her, yet she might have closed her house to

me, and have justified herself by explaining the reason, or otherwise, I should have been placed in a position where I should not have been able to explain it. But she forgave me—at least she took pity on me. Now to ask me to repay Isabel with a suggestion even of treachery, which she does not deserve of any one, much less of you or of me——

GONZALO. Who is talking about treachery?—unless you have become so friendly with Isabel that your mind, too, has been poisoned, and you are jealous yourself.

CARMEN. Oh, no doubt you believe it! And I cannot blame you. Why should my repentance be more genuine to-day than my virtue was yesterday?

GONZALO. I did not wish to give offense.

CARMEN. No, you could not be so cruel. I have not yet wept sufficiently to be able to control myself in public except at great cost.

ADOLPHE. [*To LUISA*] I shall send for the waltzes and whatever else you desire.

LUISA. I warn you that you will be throwing your money away, as I play atrociously.

ADOLPHE. Yes, through lack of practice. You have ability—oh, you have! You have the equipment of a great pianist—you have the fingers, the heart, and you have sympathy for the music. What you need is to learn to play. Music is a tonic to the soul. When one is unhappy, there is nothing like music. I should never have survived my engagement to Josefina if it had not been for music. Love went wrong with us from the beginning; it fell out badly. Señorita, we were so romantic! Our families were Capulets and Montagues, while we were Romeo and Juliet. At one time we thought that we should both die, and be buried together like them in the same tomb.

LUISA. Not really? You must have been very happy!

ADOLPHE. Have you never been in love, señorita?

LUISA. No, never. Father frightens my suitors away, as you will discover presently. He examines them about their incomes and, of course, the most interesting men never have any incomes. On the other hand, a man who has money and wants to get married is a fool entirely.

GONZALO. [*To ISABEL and MARÍA ANTONIA*] Shall we step out to the theatre? What do you say? We might take a look at that play which has made such a hit. It will amuse Josefina and Adolphe because it is so typically Spanish. They sing and dance jotás and tangos.

ADOLPHE. Oh, yes, indeed! Spanish music and dancing interest me immensely. We are Spanish at heart. When I go to a *bal masqué* in Paris, I am a *torero*.

MANUEL. A toreador?

ADOLPHE. Ah, but you should see my costume! It is beautiful, authentic, rose velvet, with green and gold *paillettes*. The *Figaro* is embroidered with carnations, and I top it off with a round hat with a red cockade, muzzling myself meanwhile in my great Spanish cloak. I stick a broadsword in my belt to finish the bull.

MARÍA ANTONIA. [*To JOSEFINA*] What do you do?

JOSEFINA. Oh, I am Carmen!

MARÍA ANTONIA. With a knife in your garter?

JOSEFINA. No, it would not be seen; I wear it in my hair to feature my *coiffure*. I fasten the open blade between the teeth of two combs. It is inscribed: "To your heart!"

RAMÓN. Oh, you devil!

ADOLPHE. Yes, that was on it, too, at least that was what papa said: "Oh, you devil!" Probably he wrote you the details.

RAMÓN. Yes, when we had no business that was more pressing to attend to.

GONZALO. Well, are we ready for the theatre? [*To ISABEL*] I am sorry you are not coming.

ISABEL. No, I am obliged to refuse.

MARÍA ANTONIA. [*Aside to ISABEL*] Yes, you are obliged to refuse, but you are not obliged to say so.

ISABEL. [*To JOSEFINA*] You must excuse me, as I cannot leave our guests.

GONZALO. [*To RAMÓN*] Perhaps you would like to come along?

RAMÓN. No, I must drop in at the club. The ladies will remain with Isabel; I shall dismiss the carriage immediately.

LAURA. I, too, must tear myself away, as I rise early. To-morrow is my busiest day.

MANUEL. Is it? Let me have your itinerary, as I may catch a glimpse of you when you get up.

LAURA. Do you expect to rise early?

MANUEL. I expect not to go to bed.

LAURA. Most unlikely. I shall stop first at the bank, where I have some drafts to indorse.

MANUEL. Do not look for me at the bank. It would seem unvaracious.

LAURA. I attend a conference next and then fly to the soup-kitchen.

MANUEL. We may meet at the soup-kitchen one of these days.

LAURA. Next...ah! I forgot to take San Antonio his share of the lottery. I purchased a ticket and we won—or rather, it was the tenth part of a ticket.

MANUEL. Have you been playing the lottery?

LAURA. The prize was merely nominal—thirty pesetas.

RAMÓN. How much are you allowing the saint?

LAURA. Two pesetas, poor dear! He is charity itself.

RAMÓN. Did you let him in when you sold that last block

of stock? If you did, he must have come off with a pretty penny.

LAURA. It is not right to joke about such things.

RAMÓN. What? Stocks?

LAURA. No, saints.

RAMÓN. My dear, you are the one who is making a joke out of saints.

GONZALO. Well, we shall be late. . . .

RAMÓN. [*Saying farewell*] Isabel, remember—you may count upon me.

ADOLPHE. Ladies, good evening. The pleasure of seeing you is so great that we hope to abuse frequently.

JOSEFINA. You will conclude that we are pests before we go.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Do not put it too strongly.

ADOLPHE. [*To CARMEN and LUISA*] Señora, señorita. . . . delighted, delighted. . . . [*To LAURA*] I shall send you the fashion-plates. [*To LUISITA*] And you shall have waltzes and the latest designs.

GONZALO. Good evening, Carmen and Luisita. Good night, Isabel. . . .

LAURA. [*To ISABEL*] We shall not see each other, I fear, for a long, long time—at least, do not count upon me for the remainder of the week. Manuel, are you staying behind?

MANUEL. For a few moments.

After exchanging farewells, LAURA, JOSEFINA, GONZALO, RAMÓN and ADOLPHE pass out.

MANUEL. Shall we wait to gossip until they reach the door?

ISABEL. I forbid it. Positively, I detest gossip.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Do you know, the bride and groom rather appeal to me? They come, of course, bent upon the conquest of Madrid, but when they retire they may consider

they are lucky to get off themselves. I know what these young couples are.

A silence.

MANUEL. It seems very quiet.

LUISA. An angel has passed.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Or a devil. Which? When every one is silent it is usually because every one is thinking the same thing, and it is unnecessary to speak in order to understand each other.

CARMEN. Possibly.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Then good night.

ISABEL. Aren't you going to wait for Pepe? He is surely coming; his letter said so.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, and meanwhile I can sit here and wait. God knows when he will put in appearance. If he does come, and does not find me here, there will not be any regrets.

ISABEL. Sit down for a moment. He will surely come.

MARÍA ANTONIA. No, no, I am going—if only for that reason. Besides, I am nervous; I do not feel well. I have an idea—why should I hide it from you?—and when I have an idea, until I put it into execution—

ISABEL. But María Antonia! What is it? You alarm me!

MARÍA ANTONIA. You will find out soon enough. Good night... for the present. Good night, Carmen and Luisita.

ISABEL. Manuel will see you home.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Why should he? It is not necessary. He seems happy and comfortable.

MANUEL. Not at all! I am going with you. Good evening, ladies. Luisita.... Isabel....

ISABEL. I depend upon you.

MANUEL. Trust me entirely.

CARMEN. Good night, María Antonia. Rest quietly and calm your nerves. I do hate to see you uncomfortable.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Of course. Good night, everybody. Good night.... Are you coming along?

MANUEL. Gladly.

They go out.

CARMEN. Poor María Antonia! The first disillusionments of married life.

ISABEL. They are the saddest, the most cruel; we have both passed through the experience. Luisita listens horrified.... you must not mind us, my dear. However clear the warning of our experience may be, you are too young to abandon a single illusion, or avoid in the future so much as one of the disenchantments of life. Nobody can learn through the experience of another. We sat at our mother's feet and listened, precisely as you do at ours, and our mothers listened to their mothers, yet we have all confided our hearts to a man with the same love, the same faith, and the same illusions as they. Life would be even sadder than it is if we were to realize upon its threshold, that we do no more in living than reincarnate the sorrows of those who have passed before us through life.

LUISA. María Antonia ought never to have married Pepe. To be happy, a girl must marry only when she is very much in love. I shall never marry in any other way. I must marry a man whom I love with my whole soul, and who loves me with his; then what reason can there be why we should not be happy? María Antonia would have been very happy if she had married Enrique. I am sorry for my poor brother; it was foolish of them both. I have never yet been able to understand why they drifted apart. I suppose the fault was Enrique's—some slight of his, perhaps, or a mistake, which María Antonia was unwilling to forgive.

CARMEN. Don't say that, my dear. You do not know how terribly it makes me feel.

ISABEL. What have you heard from Enrique? Does he write frequently?

LUISA. His letters are very sad. Father was dreadfully severe when he went away. He is severe with us all; he imagines that we do not love him sufficiently.

CARMEN. Ramón is extremely kind, but he feels that he best expresses his affection by working incessantly to make us rich. When he turns impatiently from the caresses of his children because he is absorbed in business cares, he expects them to appreciate his ill-humor, and to thank him for it, since it is an evidence of additional thousands which he is earning for them.

LUISA. He cannot understand that love takes no interest in account-books.

CARMEN. There came a time when they grew hateful, too, to me; but then, after the bitterness of many sorrows, I have learned that if true affection exists anywhere, it is only in the prose of life, and we must reconcile ourselves to finding it there, amid aridness and vulgarity, unless we are prepared to mourn all our lives an irreparable loss.

ISABEL. All men are egotists; they are forever indifferent to the emotions which we feel. Luisita is still horrified.... She will dream of unhappy marriages to-night, as children have nightmares when they listen to ghost-stories or hear tales of robbers before going to bed. No, pay no attention to what we say; it does not interest you. These are old wives' tales.... Ah! Pepe has kept his word and María Antonia did not wait....

PEPE enters.

PEPE. Good evening, Carmen. Luisita—how stunning! Where is María Antonia?

ISABEL. She was afraid you were not coming. She was tired, and did not wait.

PEPE. Is that so? Well, was she in a horrible humor all evening?

ISABEL. She was nervous. How was the reading? Interesting?

PEPE. No, it was not. What are you trying to insinuate? I went to oblige a friend, as a matter of duty, although I could never convince María Antonia.

ISABEL. Men are not always easy to convince either—not that I excuse María Antonia, but it might prove illuminating, perhaps, if we could have a little talk. I feel like a mother-in-law to-night for the first time in my life, without, I suppose, any title to the part.

PEPE. Shall we postpone it till another evening? I must hurry home if I am to receive credit for being early. María Antonia——

ISABEL. Just a moment. The lecture will not be a long one.

CARMEN. Has the carriage returned?

ISABEL. Do not go upon our account; make yourselves thoroughly at home. Besides, it is no secret. I shall not speak less plainly because you are present, and Pepe will not listen with any less patience.

CARMEN. No, we feel at liberty to go because we know you so well. Let the reproof be less public, but make it a thousand times more severe.

ISABEL *rings*, and a SERVANT *enters*.

ISABEL. Has the carriage returned for the ladies?

SERVANT. Yes, señora, a moment ago.

CARMEN. Adios, then, Isabel and Pepe. Remember, whatever Isabel tells you will be for your own good.

PEPE. Surely. I only wish María Antonia were like her.

CARMEN. Yes, I wish we were all like her. But think what it has cost her to become what she is!

LUISA. Good night, Isabel.

ISABEL. Adios, my dear. Forgive us for clouding the heaven of your dreams, but this has been a foggy day.

CARMEN and LUISA go out.

PEPE. What did María Antonia say? Did she tell you anything about me? How does she excuse her behavior?

ISABEL. She had nothing to say; she has no particular excuse. She is uneasy, apprehensive of something which only you can explain. We have all noticed it; naturally, your wife was the first. . . .

PEPE. You are wholly mistaken. There is absolutely not one word of truth in it.

ISABEL. Nonsense, Pepe! Do not try to deceive me. It may mean much or little in your life, and doubtless you judge the importance which your wife and others should attach to it, by the light in which it appears to you; but do not pretend that it is nothing, that for some months your attitude has not changed completely. All men are bad actors. It is one of their best qualities. Your vanity plays havoc with your judgment and with your self-interest. The humblest woman in the world might fall in love with a king, and no one, as far as she was concerned, be the wiser; but woe betide the luckless queen who falls in love with an ordinary man! He would make it his business to proclaim it from the housetops, although life itself were forfeit in the process.

PEPE. If that is your opinion of men——

ISABEL. Seriously, Pepe, if love never sacrifices itself, how is it to be distinguished from indifference? A man has a thousand opportunities to engage in adventures without design upon his part, into which his heart does not enter at all; nevertheless, he is tormenting the woman who has con-

fided her heart to him with all its illusions, for the rest of her days. Men are always so sure of themselves. When you embark upon an affair, you fancy you know beforehand exactly how far you will go, and you expect us to be as certain of it as yourselves. But it is never possible to answer for the heart, and it is dangerous to trifle with it, whether it be one's own, or belong to another. It is difficult to resign oneself, as I have learned by experience. Perhaps, even, resignation is not a virtue; it may be no more than temperament. There are persons who never resign themselves, who protest, who fight—and I have told you already that it is not safe to trifle with the heart; it is dangerous.

PEPE. But how shall I convince you? Who invented this story?

ISABEL. Poor Pepe! Do you really believe that you can deceive me? What are your shifts and devices beside those of my Don Juan, whom I have always with me? Merely by looking in his face, I read his innermost soul.

PEPE. But all men are not the same. I begin to suspect that you are the one who has been tampering with María Antonia.

ISABEL. If you are foolish enough to believe that, I shall never speak to you again. I am interested in your happiness—I wished to warn you in time. Now you may thank me for it. . . . But never mind. Some one is coming. . . . María Antonia!

MARÍA ANTONIA *enters*.

PEPE. María Antonia! What are you doing?

ISABEL. What is the matter?

MARÍA ANTONIA. As I had no intention of encountering him at home, perhaps it is fortunate that I have happened upon him here. Didn't you expect me? I told you that I had an idea, and that I would not rest until I had put it into

execution. Well, here they are. . . . [*Throwing a number of letters and photographs upon the table*] Do you see them? Now you know what it was; there is no need for me to tell you.

PEPE. María Antonia!

ISABEL. What have you done?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Now deny it! Say that it is a case of nerves, that I am a spoiled child! Tell me I am impossible, that I never give you any peace! What more peace do you want? You seem to have been enjoying yourself. Here, look at them! Letters, pictures. . . . Lovely, are they not? Fascinating!

PEPE. Are you crazy? I demand that Isabel read these letters. Let her decide whether there is any warrant for this jealous scene, which you have trumped up out of some ridiculous play. Letters, are they? Yes, interesting letters, such as anybody might write—to anybody, to a friend; letters from actors, pictures of actresses—because there is more than one. They are not all from the same person.

MARÍA ANTONIA. So I see. And they are not all written in the same tone either.

PEPE. Do you suppose that I attach any importance to these contemptible souvenirs? I should have shown them to you before, if I had not been certain that you would put exactly this interpretation upon them when I did so.

MARÍA ANTONIA. If I had never seen them, either before or now, then I should never have put any interpretation upon them. Do you mean to tell me that there is nothing in those letters? I am likely to believe it. Here, take any one of them. What does it say? "As I told you yesterday. . . ." How about this? "Of course, you understand. . . ." Another: "Remember what we said. . . ." Every one presupposes an interview. Why waste your time

saying anything when it is as plain as day that everything has been said already? No, there is nothing in them, there is not one glimmer of sense!

ISABEL. Are you perfectly sure?

PEPE. Probably that explains why I concealed them so carefully, where it was easy for you to lay your hands on them as soon as you descended to breaking open my furniture, with the help of the servants, no doubt, as further evidence of your delicacy and good taste.

MARÍA ANTONIA. At least I still retain womanliness enough to respect myself, and I shall not soon forget how to do so. I am quite equal to discovering what I have a right to know, in whatever way may suit my convenience.

PEPE. If you had any regard for the truth when you had discovered it, I should be delighted. Instead, all you do is to distort it, and invent lies, which have no existence outside of your own imagination.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, I have been dreaming. None of this is true; it is all imagination, a fit of nerves. Well, I have decided to cure myself. I have come here to forget—to find peace, repose!

PEPE. Yes, and you have lost no time either in rushing back to stage the spectacle. I wonder what your father will say? What will Isabel think? What will the world think?

MARÍA ANTONIA. All you need worry about is what I think. I did not come here to make a scene—on the contrary, I came to avoid one, to remain in my own home in peace, as if we had never seen each other, as if nothing had ever happened between us, as if all this were a bad dream! Do you understand me?

ISABEL. María Antonia!

PEPE. What are you talking about? Do you suppose that I will consent to this?

MARÍA ANTONIA. We shall see.

PEPE. We certainly shall see. Have you so little pride that you are willing to make us both ridiculous, not only before your parents, but publicly? When it comes to suspicion, I might have suspected myself that when one of my most intimate friends made advances to my wife, it was because her conduct justified his insolence.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Do you hear him? He insults me!

ISABEL. Pepe, stop! What are you trying to do?

PEPE. No, I did not believe it, I could not believe it. I contrived a pretext and our friendship cooled, so that nobody might suspect. You cannot say that I seemed to notice it, or that I insulted you with suspicions, as you continually insult me.

MARÍA ANTONIA. This is too much! Our cases are not similar.

PEPE. I am not so sure. It is not a question of motives, it is a question of common decency.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Have you the impudence to insinuate.... Oh, how insulting! How insulting! He dares to pretend that he might have had a suspicion of me. And you said nothing, I suppose, out of delicacy, out of fineness of feeling? Well, your delicacy is a measure of your affection, because I am not able to remain silent. I have less regard for decency than you have.

ISABEL. Listen to me, María Antonia—

MARÍA ANTONIA. This is the end! Let him go; I have finished.... I shall remain here, in my own home, with my father, and with you—yes, with you, my mother. For you are my mother!

ISABEL. Reflect! Consider—if not for my sake, for your mother's sake! You cannot do it!

PEPE. No, argument is useless. This was all prearranged; she has been waiting for a favorable opportunity to stage the scene.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, it is all my fault! It is my nerves, my nerves!

ISABEL. Silence! Your father.... Whatever you do, keep it from him. Don't let him know.... Pepe! María Antonia, I implore you.... Go before he sees you, unless you can control yourselves.

PEPE. I can conceal my feelings.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, so can I. I shall learn for once how to pretend—but it will not be for long.

PEPE. Very well. We shall take it up with your parents in the morning, when we can discuss matters more calmly.

ISABEL. Yes, to-morrow, let us wait until morning.... Dry your eyes, if you love me.

GONZALO *enters*.

GONZALO. Hello! Are you still here?

PEPE. Yes, we were just going. It was so late that we thought that perhaps we might see you.

GONZALO. I stepped out to the theatre for a moment with our young friends from Paris. Well, how was the reading?

PEPE. Pshaw! What can a man tell by a reading?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Good-by, Isabel. Good night, papa.

GONZALO. Have the clouds passed away?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, all is over.

GONZALO. Have you been crying? Tears of forgiveness are sweet—

MARÍA ANTONIA. As tears of repentance.

PEPE. Do you leave early in the morning?

GONZALO. No. Why do you ask?

PEPE. I may drop in to see you.—Will you tell him, Isabel?

ISABEL. I don't know; I cannot think.... Be sensible,

Pepe. . . . Control yourself, María Antonia. I shall come to you the very first thing in the morning.

PEPE and MARÍA ANTONIA go out.

GONZALO. Another scene, eh?

ISABEL. No, we spent a quiet evening. How did you like the play? Did our guests enjoy themselves?

GONZALO. Vastly. The music is charming—most agreeable. She was delighted; they danced a tango.

ISABEL. Josefina must have attracted a great deal of attention. She is beautiful, and exceedingly well-dressed.

GONZALO. I noticed everybody staring at our box. Naturally, when a new face appears in Madrid——

ISABEL. Especially if the face is thoroughly worth while.

GONZALO. Is there a light in the study? I have some letters to write before going to bed; I must be up early.

ISABEL. Please don't write to-night.

GONZALO. I shall not have time in the morning. That reminds me: I told Pepe I should not leave early; but I must.

ISABEL. Why?

GONZALO. A conference with Ramón before the meeting of the Junta.

ISABEL. Oh, yes! To persuade him to favor the nomination?

GONZALO. And other business. I must finish those letters.
[He passes into the study.]

ISABEL. Oh! By the way. . . .

GONZALO. [Outside] What is it?

ISABEL. Nothing. [ISABEL rings and a SERVANT enters] Ask Lucila to come to my room; I shall retire immediately. [GONZALO begins to sing in the study] You seem to be happy.

GONZALO. I was not thinking. That music runs in my head.

ISABEL. Oh, horrible! . . . Too horrible! It cannot be possible——

GONZALO. I have always had a bad ear.

[He continues to sing.]

ISABEL. But how . . . how can you be happy?

GONZALO. Are you sorry to see me happy?

ISABEL. No, no . . . No doubt you have reason to be happy.

A pause. ISABEL bursts into tears. GONZALO suddenly appears in the doorway. ISABEL endeavors to control herself, as she sees him.

GONZALO. Isabel, I have something to tell you——

ISABEL. What is it? What do you wish?

GONZALO. But what is the matter? Why are you crying? For you are crying. What is the matter?

ISABEL. Nothing, oh, nothing. I did not mean to trouble you, but María Antonia is very unhappy. She is jealous. Pepe——

GONZALO. Nonsense! Utter foolishness! Who pays any attention to such things? Nerves in a spoiled child.

ISABEL. Perhaps . . . you don't know . . .

GONZALO. And at present I do not care to be told either. I have important letters to write, I have no time to waste upon trifles. Moreover, I am happy, and I do not intend to get myself into bad humor.

ISABEL. You are right—if you can be happy.

GONZALO. But what is the matter? Why must we always have these scenes? I shall finish these letters, and then you can tell me whatever you like. Good-by, for the present.

[He disappears into the study.]

ISABEL. *[At the door]* Good night!

Curtain

THE THIRD ACT

The same scene.

ISABEL, CARMEN, LAURA, and LUISA surround GONZALO.

ISABEL. Protests are useless, as you cannot go out. Do help me convince him.

LAURA. Positively, you must not leave the house.

CARMEN. It is folly to think of it.

GONZALO. But I am perfectly well. The carriage is closed; besides, I am wrapped up majestically.

ISABEL. Why should you go out?

GONZALO. I must stop at the office.

ISABEL. Why? Ramón says it is wholly unnecessary.

CARMEN. Ramón will keep you fully informed. Isn't he coming to-day? He comes every day.

GONZALO. Yes, but it is an imposition. He has more than he can attend to already.

LAURA. Come, come, don't be disagreeable. You are worse than a spoiled child. I believe he is not himself yet; he looks very badly.

ISABEL. Doesn't he? He is weak; he cannot eat.

LAURA. And yet you insist upon going out? Take off that coat at once, hand me your hat, and have done with it! What you need is peace and quiet at home in the house. If you give us any more trouble, we shall put you to bed by main force.

GONZALO. Very well. I surrender.

LAURA. The weather to-day is terrible. I ventured out to visit my poor, when, suddenly, a gust came up, and I was in danger of being wafted away.

ISABEL. The doctor says that he is in no condition to go out.

LAURA. Pneumonia lurks on the street-corners. It is making a specialty this season of prominent people.

GONZALO. If the best people are all dying.... But are you sure that it is the modish disease?

LAURA. I advise you not to take it too lightly. Is he really unable to eat?

ISABEL. He can swallow nothing—as yet he has strength to resist.

LAURA. It seems incredible. Here, take some nourishment at once. What would you prefer?

GONZALO. But my dear Laura——

LAURA. We must feed him forcibly. [*She rings and a SERVANT enters*] Choose what you wish.

ISABEL. No, the doctor has prescribed these pills first. He insists that he cannot swallow them either.

LAURA. What is that? Give me those pills.

GONZALO. But my dear Laura——

LAURA. Open your mouth. How many does he take?

ISABEL. Two.

LAURA. Better make it three for good measure. Come, open your mouth. One, two——

GONZALO. I am choking....

LAURA. Water! Water!

LUISA. Run quick! A glass of water! He is choking!

GONZALO. Gracious!.... Don't be alarmed; I am better now....

LUISA. Wasn't it awful? I was frightened to death.

LAURA. Now the other one.

GONZALO. No, one is sufficient. Thank you so much.

LAURA. You cannot accuse us of neglecting you, whatever happens.

GONZALO. I appreciate it.

LAURA. Remember that you do not deserve such attention. I wish you could have seen us on the first day of the attack!

LUISA. We could not have cried more if you had really been dead.

LAURA. And I do not believe we should have felt worse.

GONZALO. You are extremely considerate

LAURA. I indulged myself in a vow, which I am ashamed to tell, because I am sure you would laugh at me.

LUISA. I made a vow, too.

ISABEL. Did you, Luisita? What was your vow?

LUISA. Not to go to the theatre for the rest of the month.

CARMEN. But she never said one word to us about it. Her father could not sleep last night because she refused an invitation to go to the opera.

LAURA. My vow was somewhat more ambitious. It was to make peace with my sister-in-law, Vicenta, although it is six years since we have spoken to each other. God knows it is the greatest sacrifice I could think of, because the only result of our making up will be that we shall be fighting harder than ever within two or three days.

GONZALO. But you must not do that upon my account. Your poor sister-in-law did not make any vow.

LAURA. Let her talk herself to death, if she wants to; she is a shrew. My poor brother died of her by lingering degrees.

CARMEN. [*To ISABEL*] Are you more reassured now?

ISABEL. Yes, the doctor feels that the attack was not serious.

LAURA. You should take him to a temperate climate to recuperate, such as Málaga or Nice. If you decide upon Nice, I am planning to accompany you. I have never visited Nice,

and the gay life of the Casino attracts me. Then there is roulette at Monte Carlo, which I find alluring.

ISABEL. But, Laura, you are not serious! You don't really mean it?

LAURA. I am utterly serious. I have every intention of trying my luck.

CARMEN. [*To ISABEL*] Have you talked with Ramón?

ISABEL. No. Why do you ask?

CARMEN. He has something to tell you.

ISABEL. About....

CARMEN. Yes, they are leaving for Paris.

ISABEL. Do you believe it is true?

CARMEN. It was to be expected after the trouble. You should be greatly relieved. It is the best possible solution. That woman is dangerous.

ISABEL. I am not satisfied as yet.... I never saw Gonzalo so preoccupied; he was infatuated in sober earnest.

CARMEN. I am sceptical myself.

LAURA. [*To GONZALO*] The story has become common property. You were head over heels in love, like a schoolboy. What with strolls through the Moncloa and out to the Casa de Campo, to say nothing of a fortune squandered in presents.... Why, my friends have done nothing but meet you in the shops all winter, jewellers' shops, florists' and confectioners' quite indifferently. Apparently her tastes were expensive. To cap the climax, somebody surprised you buying a tambourine with red tassels on it, and pictures of bull-fighters painted all over it.

GONZALO. How people do love to gossip! There is nothing unusual in my making purchases of that nature. Correspondents abroad are continually sending me commissions, or I have friends to oblige who live in foreign countries. Generally, they wish something distinctively Spanish, perhaps for a gift, or else as a memento.

LAURA. That might explain the tambourine, or even justify a pair of *banderillas*. But who orders jewels and flowers from Madrid?

GONZALO. We entertain constantly. The daughter of a business friend is married to-day, to-morrow the wife of another arrives, and expects me to pay her attention.

LAURA. In that case, my dear, your friends have been marrying this season *en masse*, and you have returned every species of favor. A few more winters like this, and you will be ruined irreparably.

GONZALO. What is this talk? Seriously, I am interested to hear. You meet all sorts of people; you pick up a great deal of gossip.

LAURA. For once all the different versions agree. The debacle was tremendous.

GONZALO. Idle chatter; preposterous. Anything else?

LAURA. It seems that the husband, whom you had placed with the company, presumed upon your influence to abuse his subordinates. One of them, tired of his insolence, forgot himself one day, and so the story came out, to the huge delight of the bystanders. At first a duel seemed inevitable. You flew into the appropriate passion, she no doubt did the same, but the husband remained unmoved, as the best he could do was to resign his position, and he would not have done that had it not been for the repeated, urgent insistence of the stockholders, reinforced by your good friend Ramón. Are there any corrections which you desire to make? Or is the story complete as it stands?

GONZALO. For once it does not depart very widely from the truth.

LAURA. But your poor wife....

GONZALO. Suspects nothing.

LAURA. Or you prefer to believe that she does not, in which case one ground of remorse is eliminated. How like a

man! The world is cruel. I have never ceased to bless the hour when I declined to marry.

GONZALO. Was it only a question of an hour?

CARMEN. Come over and sit by us, Luisita. The poor child wanders about the room like a lost soul. . . .

LUISA. Your conversation was not proper for me to hear, so I moved over and joined the others, and their conversation was not proper either. How old must a girl be before it is proper for her to listen to what people say?

LAURA. When it ceases to interest her, because it is no longer possible to tell her anything new.

RAMÓN *enters*.

RAMÓN. I observe that you are taking good care of the patient.

GONZALO. Care? It is sequestration. They forbid me to go out, although I should be at the office.

RAMÓN. Not as yet. I brought you some letters. . . . Pardon, Laura, I did not see you when I came in. Have you received the announcement of the new loan? I sent it immediately, at your request.

LAURA. Thank you so much; I was curious to look it over.

RAMÓN. I had no idea that you would subscribe. [*To Isabel*] What does the doctor say?

ISABEL. He may sit up, but he must not leave the house in this weather.

RAMÓN. Clearly not.

CARMEN. Now that Ramón is here, we may say good-by with a clear conscience; you have company.

GONZALO. No, remain with Isabel. We shall retire to the study.

CARMEN. Isabel is coming with us.

GONZALO. She is?

ISABEL. I must see María Antonia; I am becoming anx-

ious. Yesterday, she sent word that she was ill, and neither she nor Pepe have been heard from to-day. Since Ramón is with you——

GONZALO. Oh, yes! Go if you like. However, nothing can be the matter, or we should have heard before this.

LAURA. We withdraw, as you see, in a solid phalanx. I predict a speedy recovery.

GONZALO. Yes, instantaneous. Evidently my convalescence is not to proceed by half measures.

LAURA. I hope not, only beware of a second attack. It might prove dangerous.

CARMEN. Good morning, Gonzalo.

GONZALO. Adios, Carmen; adios, Luisita.

ISABEL. Remember, you must not talk too much about business nor anything that is serious. Whatever you do, do not allow him to smoke. I shall return in a moment.

ISABEL, CARMEN, LAURA and LUISITA *go out*.

RAMÓN. Do you feel better now?

GONZALO. I am sick, tired, bored to death. What shall I say? I am nervous.

RAMÓN. After the collapse. Everybody knows how that girl has enjoyed herself at your expense, putting you off with promises in exchange for substantial realities. A fitting end to Don Juan, who lacked the grace to retire in time! Fortunately, her departure in company with her obliging husband will not long be delayed.

GONZALO. Very well. You have forced his resignation, you have left nothing undone to magnify the incident to the utmost. I tender my resignation. I shall not concern myself further with the company nor its affairs, under any circumstances whatsoever.

RAMÓN. So you say.

GONZALO. Do you expect me to submit to being made

publicly ridiculous by an insignificant whippersnapper of a clerk, while you stand by and laugh, and have the bad taste to applaud him?

RAMÓN. If your young protégé had had the sense to mind his own business, instead of meddling among his betters with his impertinence——

GONZALO. Impertinence? He merely insisted that they should do their duty. He is accustomed to the discipline of a Parisian office, where the employees are trained to obey and to respect their superiors. Here, of course, with our sidewalk democracy, one man is as good as another—we are all gentlemen, hidalgos who work as a favor when some one pats us on the back, or bribes us by a show of familiarity between superior and inferior. That is our conception of business.

RAMÓN. You say that because it suits your convenience. Nobody is more affable than you are, nor treats people with greater consideration in the true Spanish fashion, nor are you less respected for it. That young cub fancied he had been ordained to initiate us in the ridiculous routine of the French bureaucracy, where a subordinate no sooner finds himself seated behind a desk or at an office-window, than he imagines that he belongs to a special aristocracy, which is superior to the rest of mankind.

GONZALO. If anybody was dissatisfied, why didn't they come to me? This is a conspiracy; somebody is behind it.

RAMÓN. I suppose I am? Is that it?

GONZALO. And you are not the only one. You have been influenced by your wife.

RAMÓN. By Carmen? What do you mean?

GONZALO. No, not precisely by her either—by Isabel. They are always together; they could not well be more intimate.

RAMÓN. You talk like a fool. There never was any conspiracy. Isabel did not influence my wife, although, of course, she knew all about it, nor did my wife influence me. Why should we wish to make you the laughing-stock of the office, not to say of all Madrid?

GONZALO. You have been admirably successful, however. And you have transformed my house into a dumb hell, which is the worst kind of hell.

RAMÓN. Hell?

GONZALO. Yes, and you know it. Isabel never opens her mouth, but her air of martyred resignation is a perpetual accusation, which I do not intend to tolerate. My nerves are on edge; I am determined to have done with it. I prefer to have her talk; let her get angry if she wants to. Such exaggerated resignation is too much like indifference or contempt—it is downright selfishness. Whatever it is, it is a poor indication of love.

RAMÓN. Either you misjudge Isabel, or you misjudge yourself, when you imagine that she could have accomplished by protest what she failed to accomplish by resignation. When love absents itself and grows cold, how detain it in its flight? By threats, perhaps, by force? By murder and sudden death? When the bird leaves the cage, how recall him as he flies? Either you must shoot him, resolved that he will be yours or belong to nobody, in which case you will surely recover him, but you will recover him dead, or otherwise, if you prefer him as he was, you have no recourse but to wait—to wait until the cage shall seem sweeter in his eyes than the liberty which he has enjoyed.

GONZALO. I did not know that you were a poet. It is a new side to your genius, unsuspected hitherto.

RAMÓN. We never learn to know each other fully. I am not a poet, but I understand Isabel's heart better than you

do. There was a time when I felt my Carmen's love grow cold, as Isabel does yours. Her spirit was dreamy, ambitious, while our life was prosaic indeed. I am a man so blind to idealities that it seems to me a crime not only to dream, but to sleep, unless the provision for the morrow is assured. My one thought was to work—for the sake of my wife and my children, naturally; but work, which bound me to them most closely, was, as it appeared, that which pushed them farthest away. So I observed at first a certain wistfulness, an impatience in Carmen, then coldness and indifference, then . . . then . . . how can I tell? If I had not been so sure of her honor, I might even have believed that her heart was no longer mine. I sought to impose myself, my complaints became violent and loud; I turned to threats, but the most that I could achieve was submission, respect, the outward show of love—love still absented itself and grew cold. So then, I waited; I waited, working on as before, with the same purpose—my wife, my children, and with the same love. I was hers, always hers! Then, one day, as I sat over my books and accounts, I felt two arms steal about my neck, which hugged me tight, and another face pressed close to mine, looming up over the accounts, and two tears fell upon the page and blotted the figures out, and a voice said to me, and a soul quivered in that voice: "Ramón, how good you are! And how I love you!" It was love which had returned again, love at last had understood—who knows after how many wanderings? For the poetry of our lives to-day, which are barren of swords and lances and princesses and troubadours and Moors, consists in simple duty done and the tasks of every day, in prosaic labor, to which poetry and glory are alike denied—few men, indeed, may aspire to these, or rather we all may, because glory, to men who are engaged in noble deeds, is love which comes from everywhere,

from afar off, but to those of us who toil in humble spheres, to us...to us...love is our glory, the glory of the poor, of the outcast. It is a glory which lies very near at hand, and for that reason it strikes so quickly to the heart.

GONZALO. But did you ever doubt that that glory would be yours, that you were assured of Carmen's love and the children's?

RAMÓN. I feared for them; but I never doubted for myself. So I waited—as Isabel is waiting now. That is why I told you that you knew nothing of her heart, as you know nothing of mine.

GONZALO. You never spoke like this to me before. How should I know? You are right; we never learn to know each other fully, or if we do, it is too late.

A SERVANT enters.

SERVANT. Pardon, sir. [*Offering a card*] A gentleman to see you. If you cannot receive him, he will wait, or he will come back when you are ready, sir. He must see you.

GONZALO. [*Offering the card to RAMÓN*] “Adolphe Barona.” I am not at home.

SERVANT. He knows that you are at home, sir.

GONZALO. I cannot see him.

RAMÓN. It is only a question of time, if he is determined. Better face the situation and learn what he wants—an explanation, no doubt, sufficiently annoying and unpleasant. Shall I receive him?

GONZALO. No, but you might remain. If you do, the interview will be less embarrassing and more brief. Show him in.

The SERVANT retires. ADOLPHE enters immediately.

ADOLPHE. Gentlemen!.... You have quite recovered, I trust?

GONZALO. Thank you, in part.

ADOLPHE. Don Ramón....

RAMÓN. Sir!

ADOLPHE. Your wife is well, I trust?

GONZALO. Thank you, very.

ADOLPHE. [*To RAMÓN*] I trust your wife is well?

RAMÓN. Perfectly.

ADOLPHE. How is your charming daughter?

RAMÓN. Perfectly....

ADOLPHE. [*To GONZALO*] No doubt you expected a call. I hesitated whether to write or to come myself, but Josefina advised me to call. Writing is more delicate. When one goes too far, it is easy to take it back if it is only talk, but when it is written down, if you let yourself go, there you are. Don't you think so? You know I have been insulted; you know that I must kill some one.

RAMÓN. Heavens, man! Kill some one?

ADOLPHE. Yes, kill some one, and I should have done it before, had I not cooled off and thought it over. I am not the only one who has been insulted. My wife has been insulted, France has been insulted.

RAMÓN. Gracious! The question is assuming international proportions.

ADOLPHE. Yes, somebody said, speaking of me, that I was a typical French husband.

RAMÓN. Of course, you ignored it. Literature is probably responsible for the prevalent opinion of French husbands.

ADOLPHE. Ah! Suppose I had not cooled off and thought it over?

GONZALO. Don't you exaggerate? I see nothing in all this except ignorance of our character and our customs upon your part, an excessive formalism, if you will—severity; as for those who insulted you, they merely displayed ill-breed-

ing and ill-temper. Now, when you attempt to magnify the incident——

ADOLPHE. I understand it rather thoroughly; I have talked it over with my wife. If we had been willing to submit to humiliation, of course this never would have happened. We should have had no difficulty whatever.

RAMÓN. What do you mean?

ADOLPHE. An influential person has been paying court to my wife. I do not know who he is, I do not care to know. . . .

RAMÓN. [*To GONZALO*] There you are——

ADOLPHE. I cannot continue with dignity in my present position. Nobody comes forward to indemnify me for my loss of time, for the expenses of removing to Madrid, where I had understood that my position was to be permanent. As my wife says, I am ruined. I expected stable employment, now we are obliged—how do you put it?

RAMÓN. To saddle yourselves.

ADOLPHE. Exactly. It is a mistake. We came prepared, but we have been defrauded. We find ourselves saddled with an establishment.

GONZALO. If you have suffered loss, or been inconvenienced in any way——

RAMÓN. I offered him the necessary relief, but he said that his dignity had been offended. Was that what you said?

ADOLPHE. Yes, but I was excited at the time. I have cooled off and thought it over. Suppose I had not had any dignity, I might have retained my position, I might have been promoted and have made a great deal of money, like other men without brains, who have never done anything, and nobody can explain it either, except their wives; yet they are the ones who gossip and criticise everybody.

RAMÓN. What is that? What are you talking about?

ADOLPHE. I know what I am talking about, because I have heard other people talking, although you may not—

RAMÓN. I certainly have not, but you are in a position to inform me. You are not such a coward as to be afraid to mention names.

ADOLPHE. I am not such a coward as to be intimidated into mentioning them.

RAMÓN. Eh?

GONZALO. [*To ADOLPHE*] As this is my house, you will kindly address your remarks to me; I am the person you desired to see.

RAMÓN. No, leave him to me—

GONZALO. Enough of this! Obviously, your chief concern is—what shall I say?—the practical question; at least you convey that impression. As for these expenses you speak of, this indemnization to which you consider yourself entitled, and which I ought to provide—I take it that I am a person who is thoroughly competent to estimate the expenses of your establishment.

ADOLPHE. You are, as I take it; Josefina always consulted you and your wife. I never know the cost of anything. However, we shall be obliged—how shall I say it?—to hold an auction, to ask for the highest bidder. So I am giving you notice before posting the bills. If you are interested, we are making special prices to our friends.

RAMÓN. Thank you very much.

GONZALO. Good! You shall be reimbursed in full in the morning; we understand each other. I am anxious that you should carry away only pleasant memories of Madrid.

ADOLPHE. Yes, indeed! Poor Josefina is desolated at the thought of quitting Madrid. Should she ever meet disaster, she says we must look for her here. So if to-morrow is convenient—

GONZALO. To-morrow then. Without fail.

ADOLPHE. I trust that we may often have the pleasure——

GONZALO. Assuredly.

ADOLPHE. I trust that you appreciate my delicacy in this affair.

GONZALO. It has been exquisite, my dear Alphonse——pardon, Adolphe.

ADOLPHE. Yes, Adolphe, if you please. Alphonse is a term applied to certain subjects in Paris . . .

GONZALO. Acquit me of any intention.

ADOLPHE. I hope so. Adios, Don Ramón.

RAMÓN. Señor!

ADOLPHE. Don't call me that. Why so formal? I have cooled off and thought it over.

RAMÓN. I thought it over before I was cold. Does that satisfy you?

ADOLPHE. Entirely. I retire, as my wife says, I take my leave. Or, as you put it, I swallow it whole. Good luck, gentlemen. *[Goes out.]*

RAMÓN. If that boy were not his father's son——

GONZALO. What makes you think so?

RAMÓN. He would never leave this house sound and whole. Who says that he is a fool? Precious angel! Although this was not his idea; it shows the hand of that shameless hussy, his wife.

GONZALO. She certainly has an appealing touch.

RAMÓN. Appealing? Very. But there was one thing that he said——

GONZALO. I did not hear him say anything.

RAMÓN. There was one thing that he said which you did not let him finish. You seemed to anticipate his demands, as if you were afraid that he might talk too much if you

did not, but as soon as he was satisfied. . . . I am not without means, however, of verifying his insinuations.

GONZALO. I heard nothing which could have been intended even remotely for you.

RAMÓN. He could not have invented it; he must have been told——

GONZALO. Come, come! If we are to continue like this, we shall all of us go mad. This is nothing more than mere vulgar extortion, a case of ridiculous *chantage*, which it would be even more ridiculous to take seriously. You were right: it is a fitting end to Don Juan, who lacked the grace to retire in time. It was my fault. I admit it, and rest in peace. I fail to see how the matter interests you. What are you thinking about? Is it possible that you can take it seriously? Come, come, man!

RAMÓN. Let me alone, I tell you! Let me alone!

GONZALO. Ramón!

RAMÓN. If it should be true, if it is. . . . But no! No!

GONZALO. Ramón! Hush! Isabel! . . . We shall see.

RAMÓN. Yes, for her sake—let us wait!

ISABEL *enters*.

ISABEL. Am I late? Are you feeling better? But what is the matter? Why are you looking like this?

GONZALO. Nothing is the matter.

ISABEL. No, you have been talking business. You have been arguing, and you are both angry.

GONZALO. I tell you that we have not. How was María Antonia? How about Pepe? Did you find them in?

ISABEL. No, they were out.

GONZALO. Then. . . . But you do not seem pleased. What is the matter?

ISABEL. Didn't I tell you that they were both out? It

is a sign they are well. I was surprised to find you so excited when I came in; you have been quarrelling.

GONZALO. How silly! A mere difference of opinion. Ramón will explain.

RAMÓN. We were discussing the company.

ISABEL. Gracious! But are you ill? You look so pale. [To RAMÓN] I am sure you are not the one who began it.

GONZALO. It was all my fault. I must sign these papers and send an explanation to the boy's father. They are returning to Paris.

ISABEL. Who are?

GONZALO. Who do you think? Why must you force me to say it? Don't you know? Aren't you glad of it?

ISABEL. I?

GONZALO. Will you never say what you think? [*Goes out.*]

ISABEL. I am helpless. He is not satisfied to torment me; he wants to see me suffer.

RAMÓN. Isabel, will you forgive me if I revert to the past and reopen sores that are forgotten?

ISABEL. You?

RAMÓN. I know that you will not tell me the truth, but no matter. You are the only one who can restore peace to my mind, although it may be with a lie.

ISABEL. But what is it? What happened between you and Gonzalo while I was away? That woman's husband was here. But why? What did he say?

RAMÓN. Who cares? Is he a rogue or a fool? But there was one thing that he said, which either he invented, or which he has heard, gossip, perhaps, for its own sake, which amounts to nothing, but which had never occurred to me before. There are moments when a chance word, like a lightning flash, illuminates the darkest, most hidden corners of our

lives. Why did my boy Enrique give up María Antonia? Why was it?

ISABEL. That is indeed a sore that is forgotten. Don't you know?

RAMÓN. Yes, I know what Enrique told me, what was said by our friends. Enrique had had relations with a poor girl, María Antonia was jealous and unwilling to forgive. She believed that the intimacy had not been broken off—

ISABEL. Then you know as much about it as we do.

RAMÓN. Only it never occurred to me till now that this explanation might not be the real one, that it was merely a pretext of Carmen's, of yours, of our friends, so as to avoid . . . I never dreamed until this moment—well, what I have just heard. I am not a man of great ability, my talents cannot have been of much assistance to Gonzalo, yet he has always kept me by him, in the positions of chief importance. Thanks to him, I enjoy a fortune, I am rich, I thought I was happy. But why? Why is it that I have all these things? My God, why is it?

ISABEL. You have worked faithfully and hard, you are intelligent. This is unworthy of you. What are you thinking about? What have you heard? When you doubt, you not only doubt Gonzalo's friendship, you doubt—

RAMÓN. I know it—and I cannot, no, I cannot. It would be too horrible. Tell me that I am wrong, that I have no right to think it, that if this thing could be, if it could have been—

ISABEL. Carmen would not be my most intimate friend. Is that what you mean? I could not have loved her as I do, as a sister. And you see it, you know it. Surely I would have suspected before you, if your suspicions had been justified. If they are true, I must have disguised my feelings out of policy, or under the threats of my husband. Policy and pretense have their limits. I am not a saint; the

most that I could have done would have been to have presented an outward appearance of courtesy in public, but genuine, unreserved friendship, friendship such as that which unites me with Carmen, friendship which is of the heart, because I am convinced of her loyalty, as you must be convinced of it. . . . However anxious a jealous woman may be to pretend, she is incapable of pretending to such an extent; in itself that should be enough to convince you. I could not pretend with Josefina. Neither policy nor courtesy availed for one moment, and I refused to receive her in my house. When you imagine that I have pretended to love Carmen all these years. . . . I appreciate the compliment, Ramón, but either you have too sublime an idea of me, or else you know very little about women, when you persuade yourself that however discreet a woman may be, she is capable of admitting another woman to her house, as I admit Carmen, if a suspicion, even, has crossed her mind that now or ever. . . . although Gonzalo's reputation might make any suspicion seem plausible. But we insult Carmen when we deny what there never was any reason to believe. Neither in my heart, nor in hers, nor in yours is there warrant to do so. Nonsense, Ramón, these are evil thoughts. I do not know how I shall punish you, unless having had them, indeed, is not the worst of all punishments.

MANUEL *enters*.

MANUEL. My dear Isabel. . . . Don Ramón!

ISABEL. This is an unexpected pleasure. I should have been obliged to send for you had you remained away another day.

RAMÓN. I was about to leave as you came. Isabel, surely Gonzalo has signed those papers by this time. Good day.—Good day. . . .

MANUEL. Good day to you.

ISABEL. Is it all over? Not a shadow of an evil thought remains?

RAMÓN. I told you that you could make me believe whatever you wished, whether the truth or a lie. You are so good, so very good, that you can do what you say no woman can ever do, however saintly she may be! [*Goes out.*]

ISABEL. I am exhausted.

MANUEL. Was he too much for you? What is the trouble?

ISABEL. No, but I have lied so sincerely, so honestly, that it really seems to me as if I had not been lying. To lie like that does not lie upon the conscience; it is absolved by the heart.

MANUEL. You lie?

ISABEL. Let us talk of something else. I have been impatient to see you, to-day of all others.

MANUEL. I have been thinking of you so busily that doubtless I have appeared forgetful.

ISABEL. Have you forgotten your promise?

MANUEL. Not for an instant. Vigilance has been necessary of late—to the limit.

ISABEL. Of late? How so? What do you know?

MANUEL. María Antonia and Pepe live in a state of open warfare.

ISABEL. They never come to see us, in spite of Gonzalo's illness. I called at their house to-day, but they were out; and the maid, a girl whom I trust, as I placed her with María Antonia, told me the whole story. They quarrel incessantly; there are recriminations at all hours. To continue like this is impossible.

MANUEL. It is positively dangerous for María Antonia.

ISABEL. What have you heard?

MANUEL. I have heard of chance encounters in the Prado Gallery.

ISABEL. Between whom? María Antonia and——

MANUEL. Oh, they are purely casual; quite by chance. As if you were to say to me, casually: Do you know, I am

wholly ignorant of the Prado Gallery? And I were to reply: Is it possible? And you: I intend going one of these days. So I go every day until, naturally, as I go every day and you one of these days, we meet casually, and that is the way that they met, casually.

ISABEL. I knew it all the time! Did your friend tell you this?

MANUEL. Can't you see them?—a dreamer in love with an innocent woman! They view the paintings together, their artistic susceptibilities are aroused.... Art has always been a prime conductor of love currents.

ISABEL. Flippancy is out of place. Tell me seriously what you know, everything that your friend has confided to you.

MANUEL. I can tell you something a great deal more serious. María Antonia has committed an indiscretion. She has been foolish——

ISABEL. Great heaven!

MANUEL. She has written a letter.

ISABEL. Which you have read? Did that man trust it to you? The scoundrel! He is no better than the rest—an empty boaster, puffed up with vanity! Is this the ideal for whom my poor child has forgotten her duties as a wife? Tell me what was in that letter.

MANUEL. I merely said that it was indiscreet. She dismisses him, she deprives him of all hope. Nevertheless, she entreats, and to entreat is to confess weakness; to confess weakness is to fear vanquishment.

ISABEL. Does this fellow hope——

MANUEL. He permits himself a slight hope.

ISABEL. I must see María Antonia at once, in the presence of her father and her husband. They must realize the danger clearly. María Antonia must be saved at any cost. She shall never have cause to hang her head

in shame before her husband—she must always be right, always, not only because I love her as I should my own daughter, as I do myself, as I did her mother, but because my pride in my womanhood, amid all the inequalities which we suffer at the hands of men, admits of every inequality and will endure any humiliation save this—that they should ever have the right to say to one of us: Who are you to accuse me? Ah! Never that! Our burdens may be more onerous but we are stronger than you to bear them. You cannot say that we are equal, no, but we can say: We are not equal, it is true. We are better than you are.

MARÍA ANTONIA and PEPE enter.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Isabel! Mother!....

ISABEL. María Antonia!

MARÍA ANTONIA. Ah! At last I can cry! At last I can tell you everything—yes, you, only you, my mother! For him I have only scorn and contempt, and I ignore him with silence.

PEPE. It does not matter. Remain silent, or indulge your contempt, as may prove convenient. It is my turn to speak.

ISABEL. What have you done? What is it?

MARÍA ANTONIA. Who cares what he says? My only regret is that he is not right when he says it.

PEPE. You hear her, Isabel. Where is her father? I have business with him. [*To MANUEL*] No, don't you go; apparently, you are one of the family. Besides, you are sufficiently intimate with a certain person to render it desirable that you be present. Where is her father?

MARÍA ANTONIA. A proper person for you to consult. I shall talk with Isabel, and with no one else. Never let me see you again! You can tell my father whatever you like.

PEPE. I shall.

ISABEL. Yes, leave us. I must consult with María Antonia. Find Gonzalo. Tell him whatever you see fit. I shall say nothing until I have talked with her—for I know that she will not deceive me.

PEPE. Is he in the study?

ISABEL. Yes. [PEPE *hurries out*] Follow him, Manuel. You know the truth—if what you have told me is the truth, and nothing else can be the truth.

MANUEL. Whatever María Antonia tells you will be the truth.

ISABEL. She will tell the truth to me.

MANUEL *goes out*.

ISABEL. Yes, whatever you tell me will be the truth to me. Is Pepe jealous?

MARÍA ANTONIA. You heard what he said.

ISABEL. Does he. . . .

MARÍA ANTONIA. It is all as clear to him as day. He is returning me to you; now he is the one who is doing it, so that his honor shall not suffer. Nothing could be simpler. What a noble, sensitive thing this sense of honor is! Thanks to it I have accomplished in one hour what tears and complaints, yes, and a broken heart, could never do. I am home again to forget, to find release. He would never have let me come upon my own account, and you would not have received me—you would all have been against me. But now that it is no longer I, now that it is a question of his honor, nobody opposes it. I was a fool not to realize before how easy it would be to rid myself of him, and to regain my self-respect before my own conscience, to bring relief to my heart!

ISABEL. Yes, talk, talk as you do now, and I will listen undisturbed, conscious that you have not failed. Grow indignant, burn with holy rage! Do not be cast down nor de-

pressed—that might mean humiliation, that might mean guilt. But there was none, I know. Look at me, in the face, full in the eyes—now. They are as clear as the heart below; not a tear. It was not your fault?.... By the memory of your mother!

MARÍA ANTONIA. No, by her memory. But by her memory, by all the deviltries and all the faithlessness of men, I tell you that if the wish, yes, and the purpose, to be guilty are as guilty as the act itself, no woman ever was more guilty. From the bottom of my soul I swear it! I wish that nothing had held me back—not virtue, nor shame, nor my mother's name, nor example, no, and not your love nor your example, holy as were hers; nothing, nothing! You know what I have suffered; your heart has been torn, your life has been wrecked; and you, too, must have felt sometimes, however saintly you may be, the thirst for vengeance for wrongs, for humiliations undeserved—yet you know that when a woman is born honorable, it is not easy for her to cease to be so.

GONZALO *enters*.

GONZALO. Is what Pepe tells me true? Has your husband told me the truth? If he has, there is no room for you in my house any more than in his. If you dishonor your husband there, you dishonor your father here.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Ah!

ISABEL. Gonzalo!

GONZALO. Do not defend her! Make no excuse! Out of my house! Never let me see you again!

ISABEL. No, you shall not see her. Come with me, and do not cry—do not cry, my daughter. Resent this insult if you are not guilty, as you have resented it to me, angrily. For you have told me the truth?....

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yes, mother.

GONZALO. Out of my house, I tell you! Get out!

ISABEL. Not so fast! She is going...later. And she will not go alone.

MARÍA ANTONIA and ISABEL *pass out, but presently*
ISABEL returns.

GONZALO. Not alone, do you say?

ISABEL. Once more you are unjust, selfish, cruel, because you are—a man! Do you think that María Antonia has done wrong? You do believe it, don't you? And you are outraged. I tell you that even if she has to understand it, I excuse it, and I shall say to her: You did right, you did perfectly right! Do you hear?

GONZALO. An easy thing for you to say, since she is not your daughter.

ISABEL. Another lie. If she were, all the more reason why I should say to her: You did right, you did perfectly right, my daughter!

GONZALO. Yes, and doubtless you have said it already; you have excused her in advance, and encouraged her. I suspected it....

ISABEL. Why not add that I set her the example? Be as extreme as you like. This is one of those decisive days in which life presents us with the balance of many years. It contains everything—all our words, all our deeds, however insignificant; life forgets nothing. This is a day of reckoning for you, and it was time. It comes to us when we least expect it, almost always in some roundabout way, as a blessing, perhaps, or filling us with alarm. There are men who toil all their lives, apparently without result, until, as they are giving up in despair, a legacy drops from heaven, or it may be the lottery—something which seems to be chance, but it is life which pays. There are others who commit terrible crimes, yet live on prosperously and rich during many years; but one day sorrow comes—the death of a loved child, or it may be a

grinding sickness, or disaster unforeseen, when no riches can avail. Life presents its bill. It takes your daughter, the absorbing passion of your life, the paragon of womanly submission in your eyes, of all the virtues which belong to honorable wives; and you are indignant, you are shocked; you yearn to punish your daughter, when it is your daughter who is punishing you, punishing you for her mother—for her mother and for me.

GONZALO. Punishing me? But why? Why should she?

ISABEL. What do men know about women? You understand the lies of the women who deceive you, but you have no conception of the love of a good woman, how deeply and truly she loves you. Reserve is always more instinctive in women than love. Our love is silent through reserve, through reserve our desires are silent, too, and our jealousy is silent oftentimes. Yet you do not, you will not understand that an honest woman cannot struggle without violence to her very being when your love turns away and grows cold. So we submit in silence to the humiliation and the pity of the women who attract you with all the coquetry and calculated coyness of their art, which you would despise in us, because even you can never confound their boudoirs with our homes. You take your passions to them, you fly to them in the easy irresponsibility of a certain sort of life; you squander upon them what you scrape and save with us, and implore of them lavish kisses which you would disdain in your wife, because her duty assures you of them—whenever your desire exacts, we obey—yes, your desire, which often enough is plainly only another desire which you have not been able to satisfy, and which drives you to us with all the appearances of love. This is what men are, and yet you presume to sit in judgment upon us at the suggestion even of a fault, without mercy. I tell you from my heart that I am

only sorry that the fault was not real, and that it was not mine, if it might have caused you greater pain had it been so.

GONZALO. No, Isabel. You are unjust if you have ever thought, however great my offenses against you may have been, that they deserved the punishment of not believing in you, or of doubting your faith for one moment. You cannot know how deeply I love you. I have been cruel and selfish, as you say, I have tortured your heart, but you cannot, you must not doubt my love. It may be that we give no one so much pain in our lives as we do our mother; it may be that there is no love to which we sacrifice less, so sure are we of its possession forever, that forever it will pardon and forgive. With merely living and being happy it seems to us that our mother's love is repaid. But the living faith which inspires us, in appearance makes us seem less devout, all the while in the recesses of our hearts more deeply believing in that holy, never-dying love of which we are assured. What other love in life is equal to this, which is at once and eternally the faith and hope of the heart? Confess that there has never been a moment when you would have exchanged places with any of the other women who have passed through my life; confess that you have always believed that when I have compared you with them all together, the thought of you has been as a halo, as the altar before the image of the saint. Can you imagine how proud I have been to repeat over and over, that among all of them, she alone has been in my heart, she alone has been faithful, she always has been true, she, my wife—as my mother? And do you pretend that María Antonia has acted wisely? No, you do not believe it; you do not think it, because you know that my love is true, and the adoration which I feel, because you were always the one who waited, the one who forgave, always, like a mother, like a saint, like something which is above and superior to

all else in the world, like heaven in our lives. No, do not attempt to tell me that María Antonia has acted wisely, do not tell me that you wish it had been you. If I had had for one instant ground to accuse you.... I do not know.... I do not know.... How can I tell, when I cannot even conceive that such a thing could be?

ISABEL. Gonzalo! My Gonzalo! You are right—for-giving always, waiting always, for I have learned to wait.... And now, at last, I feel that my waiting has not been in vain!

CARMEN *enters*.

CARMEN. Isabel! Isabel!....

ISABEL. Carmen!

CARMEN. Ramón has told me. He came to me in tears, like a child, and asked my forgiveness for having dared even so much as to doubt. Forgiveness from me, imagine it—who can never forgive myself! He told me that you—and I could not wait, I had to see you, to fall on my knees before you, if only you allow. I suffer horribly. I should have confessed, but then the mortification would no longer have been mine alone, it would have attached to you—and you are free from blame.

ISABEL. Yes, I am free from blame.... I am very happy. Gonzalo, bring your daughter. As you believe in me, there was no fault in her.

GONZALO. I obey....

MANUEL *enters*.

MANUEL. Isabel, Pepe has listened to reason. He is convinced that he is wrong, and he is willing to forgive. He only fears that María Antonia—

ISABEL. Yes, not as yet....

CARMEN. Not as yet? María Antonia and Pepe....?

ISABEL. It is not easy to resign oneself, to learn to wait.

MARÍA ANTONIA *enters, followed by PEPE.*

ISABEL. Come, María Antonia. Come, both my children. . . . Embrace your father. You will forgive your husband, too, some day.

MARÍA ANTONIA. No, all is over between us. I shall never forgive him.

ISABEL. Oh, yes, you will! And you will be as happy as I am.

MARÍA ANTONIA. As you are? Are you happy?

ISABEL. Very. Light and thoughtless love, which breathes only illusion and desire, sheds all its flowers in one brief burst of spring; but the love of a wife, love which is holy and true, love which has learned to wait, has other, later flowers, Autumnal Roses, which are ours. They are not the flowers of love, they are flowers of duty, watered patiently by tears of resignation, and fragrant of the soul, with the touch of eternity, my husband.

GONZALO. My wife and saint! On my knees I adore you.

ISABEL. I am very happy. These are my Autumnal Roses.

Curtain

